

HICKS JAROU

MRS. JAMES C. FIFIELD





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BY

MRS. JAMES C. FIFIELD

Mrs. James C. Fifield



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TO MY HUSBAND

*In grateful appreciation of his
encouragement and assistance.*

HICKS JAROU

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CHAPTER I.

How would you like to find yourself in a position where you were compelled to accept, as a demonstrated fact, something that your common sense told you couldn't possibly have happened? A bit embarrassing, eh?

Well then, perhaps you can sympathize with the leading citizens of Royalton — the Smart Set of Royalton — as sane a people as can be found in the sanest of Eastern cities — a people who boast that they take nothing for granted — the you've-got-to-show-me sort of people.

It happened in 1920, and even today they are obliged to admit that it happened, although all known natural laws were thereby transcended. They hate to talk about it. They usually change the subject whenever anyone, new in Royalton, recalls the published reports that dealt with the situation between the years of 1921 and 1924, and asks them when they last saw Hicks Jarou.

You have guessed that Royalton is not the name of the city where the events you are to read about took place; soon you will understand why a fictitious name must be used. Please remember that this story tells of something that you'll declare could not have happened, yet which the sanest citizens of Royalton must forever declare did take place. You are warned that even the friendliest ridicule will not be tolerated, when these good people are obliged to admit that it really did.

The very mention of Hicks Jarou causes a decided upheaval in the angry passions of Royalton's Smart Set, but among scientists he stands at the head of the section devoted to biological research.

Royalton is a thriving city with a government of its own and all the extravagances of modern life, yet it is near enough to New York city to speak of itself as "a suburb, really, don't you know?" There are few towns of its size that can boast more millionaires. It has a very self-satisfied social set who receive invitations to the most exclusive affairs of New York, Boston and Washington — and some of them have desirable invitations from Philadelphia. It has the further distinction of having first been tried out by more than one person of distinguished appearance who was afterward received in the larger cities and entertained, as members of aristocratic families from other lands would expect to be entertained — quite royally! Do you get the touch of irony in the name, Royalton? One feels rather mean to add — what Royalton never mentions — that usually their aristocratic friends proved to be disappointing. Sometimes they left the larger cities two jumps ahead of an officer.

But everyone in Royalton had declared, as soon as they met him, that Lord Percy Southdown was different. They said he was the real thing. The name we have selected for his appearance in this story hardly does justice to his distinguished personality, but the family whose name he borrowed must not be given any more undesirable publicity, therefore the pseudonym. Lord Percy bore wonderful letters of introduction, but he seldom exhibited them. He didn't talk much about himself — but somehow there are news items about royalty that always manage to get themselves known. To all intents and purposes he was what Royalton wanted him to be. The Social Set made much of him, and rejoiced that he appeared to feel so much at home among them.

Before many months it became understood that Lord Percy would marry Beatrice Willis, and there were mothers of pretty daughters who were frankly dissatisfied with his choice. It must be added, that they lived to rejoice that he had not chosen

one of their daughters, but since that is really not a part of this story, it can be dismissed with this casual reference.

The point is that if Lord Percy Southdown had not asked Beatrice to marry him, and if she had not taken the matter under consideration,—in fact, appeared willing to marry him—it is quite certain that what happened might never have taken place. You see, Franklin Potter wanted Beatrice for himself, and he got busy.

Franklin Potter owned Royalton's leading paper, which was tottering when he bought it, and was now a power. He had lived in Royalton a year longer than Lord Percy, but he hadn't become as popular. He believed there was no reason for that except his lack of a title. He was a lawyer as well as a newspaper man, and was well read on all the important topics of the day. He had offices in the best building in town, and no other offices in Royalton were as lavishly furnished. He gave every evidence of having plenty of money. He paid cash for everything he purchased. He had the best rooms in the best hotel. He dressed to perfection. He spent money generously, and entertained as often as he could manage to secure desirable guests. He was better looking than Lord Percy, but not as distinguished in appearance. The only suspicious point in his case, so far as Royalton could say, was that he never mentioned his birthplace or his family, told no one of his earlier years, and allowed no one to know how he happened to have so much money. It had been ascertained that he received a bank draft every month, and that he had no bank account.

Although Franklin Potter's paper, *The Royalton Star*, gained rapidly in importance after he took it over, he didn't appear to do much himself, either as editor or manager, both of which offices he held. But he had money enough to hire the best help available, and it soon became apparent that he knew how to choose. His paper alone would have given him a fairly strong position in the social life of Royalton, if only more could have been known about the man himself. An editor who did not do

editorial work; a lawyer who did not practice law; why the extravagant suite of offices?

There was something of a sensation when it became known that Franklin Potter considered himself an authority on genealogical lore. The study and investigation of genealogies was his hobby. He declared openly that he knew nearly all there was to be known about that most fascinating topic. Royalton's ladies became quite excited over it. Who knew how many of them might be entitled to a coat of arms—not that it really mattered, of course, only it was interesting—gave them something new to think about. They visited Franklin Potter in his beautiful offices, and few of the ladies told their friends they were going.

"Yes," said Franklin, gravely, "It is a wonderfully interesting study."

He finally decided that he might be induced to study the past history of a few families—those whose histories were really interesting—but he gave warning that his prices would be high. On the other hand clients were assured that they would be treated with the greatest sympathy, and absolute secrecy could be depended upon. Franklin Potter soon had more work than he could do.

Lord Percy Southdown was not one of Potter's clients; therefore there could have been no promise of secrecy. Anyhow, closely following the reports of the engagement of Beatrice Willis to Lord Percy, it became known—or suspected—that once more Royalton had been deceived, and that Lord Percy Southdown was not what they had believed him to be. That was a shock. Leading citizens actually threatened Franklin in sugar-coated and highly civilized speech which really means when reduced to its lowest terms, put up or shut up. Without more ado, in a most businesslike manner, Franklin Potter proved his point concerning his rival. The Royalton Star carried the exposé, which was masterly in its presentation, and horribly convincing. Royalton had been fooled again, and

almost hated the man who had opened their eyes to their own sickening gullibility. Incidentally, however, Potter had greatly added to his prestige as a genealogist, and could not be ignored. He now knew too much about everybody.

It was expected that Lord Percy would leave town as quickly and as quietly as possible—and he did, but not as expected. He was spectacular to the last. His dead body was found jammed into a sewer not a hundred feet from the hotel where he had lived. It appeared that he had been murdered. His rooms gave no evidence that he had been planning to leave town either quickly or quietly. They were paid for a month in advance.

Lord Percy left a will that had been drawn just a week before Franklin Potter's terrible discovery that Percy's father was a mechanic in Yorkshire, before he died—not even an overseer, but that he had worked with his hands. Percy left his property—some ten thousand dollars—to Franklin Potter.

"I may be killed for knowing too much about poor Potter and his benefactor," he wrote, "and I want to leave what I have to the poorest man I know. I therefore will and bequeath all I have left to Franklin Potter, his heirs and assigns forever, and may Heaven have mercy on his shrunken little soul. With this bequest goes a deeper sympathy for the poor cuss than can possibly be put into words."

When that will was made public, Franklin Potter turned pale. He quite suddenly looked stricken—like a very old man whose last dollar has been stolen by the friend he had most trusted. He opened his mouth—closed it—opened it—closed it—for all the world like a suffocating fish; and his hands beat the air weakly as he sought for words to express his horror and indignation. If he had quarreled with Percy—perhaps struck him, not expecting to kill him—and then discovered that he had killed a man who only wished to befriend him—in such an event one could imagine that a man might look exactly as Franklin did look when his amused friends sought to congratulate him on account of his inheritance.

"Not a large sum to be sure," they murmured—"especially to a man of your resources; still, ten thousand is ten thousand—not to be sneezed at, old boy—not by any manner of means to be sneezed at."

"But I don't want that money," he finally managed to gasp. "I don't want the damned stuff. I won't have it. Why in creation should the crazy fool have left it to me! And why his absolutely unfounded insinuations!"

That was a question that rapidly became of general interest. Why had Percy Southdown left all he had to Franklin Potter? To Franklin Potter to whom a sum like that was evidently a mere bagatelle. Whom did he think was Franklin's benefactor? Why had Percy said he considered Franklin the poorest man he knew? Did he really know anything about Franklin's past life? Why had he sympathized with him very much as a kindly man would sympathize with a suffering dog? Finally, would he have left his money to Franklin had he known of the exposure that was so soon to be printed in the genealogical department of *The Royalton Star*? It had been ascertained that the will had been drawn two days before that exposure. Poor Percy's death had not followed so swiftly that he could not have had time to change his will had he wanted to. He had quite evidently expected to be murdered; who did he think would kill him? Franklin Potter? But in that case would he have left his money to Franklin?

Who was the murderer? Royalton talked of nothing else until after the funeral—which everyone attended. But it was a topic that soon lost interest. Could Society be expected to feel as it would have felt had not Lord—ahem! poor Percy—made his cruel deception the background of a long list of social experiences the mere recollection of which brought goose-flesh on the tender frames of Royalton's most exclusive set? Most certainly not.

Franklin Potter expressed a desire to devote his life to discovering the murderer of Percy, and society applauded. Under

the circumstances could the man do less? There were one or two private detectives who believed a very pretty case might be worked up against Franklin—but no one sought their services.

So far as this story is concerned Percy's death is not a matter of so much moment, just now, as was the effect of that death on Franklin Potter's future. To have robbed Percy of his self-assumed title would have been quite sufficient to remove him from the list of suitors accredited to Miss Beatrice Willis.

It was decided that Franklin could gain nothing by also removing the man. He was never openly accused of the murder. No one really believed that he did it, or forgot that he was the only one who had cause for doing it. And yet he was not forced out of the social swim.

Gossips declared that the loss of his title might not have caused Beatrice to break her engagement with Percy. She had never appeared to be as interested in such things as her mother was. They believed she might have liked Percy quite as well if he had had no title at all—a point wherein Franklin Potter did not agree with the gossips. It was, however, quite universally conceded that the deception the man had practiced would, of course, have proven absolutely unforgivable. Everyone knew that Beatrice was a stickler for absolute honesty. It was noticed that she shed no tears at Percy's funeral. It also became known that she refused to see Franklin Potter when he called on the evening following the funeral, and that she charged the servants to make it quite clear to him that she did not wish him to call again. Later, she declared that she was not interested when told that Franklin had given the Southdown bequest to a charitable institution of which she was one of the sustaining members. She looked incredulous when told of Franklin's intention to hunt down Percy's murderer.

With poor Percy decently buried, Royalton felt that it had done all that could be expected of a town he had so cruelly hoaxed, no matter how much he had made himself beloved.

They agreed, quite magnanimously, that Percy had been popular ; that his company had been constantly sought for ; that he had been the life of every party, and that his presence had served to add to the aristocratic tone of every event. He would be missed, of course ; but they could not be expected to lose any more sleep on his account. They had done very well, indeed, not to damn his memory, as he deserved. Instead they would dismiss him from their minds from that moment.

And then came the morning papers with a story almost too gruesome to be believed.

Old Wash Harris, the negro grave digger employed by Royaltan's very elegant and up-to-date moratorium, chanced to remember that he had left a favorite spade near the new-made grave of Percy Southdown, and went out to the cemetery to get it before someone stole it. He went on his motorcycle, at a moderate rate of speed, enjoying the wonderful moonlight. He returned as if the devil were traveling close behind him, and his complexion was as nearly ashy as a negro's face ever gets. He was too scared to tell what had frightened him—that is, so as to make himself clearly understood. There was something about a tall thin dark man with hoofs and a tail who was working in his shirt-sleeves beside the grave of Percy Southdown. But Percy was not in his grave. He was sitting up in his coffin, with his chin on his breast. Wash had seen him as plainly as he had even seen anything in his life. No, sah ! he had not been drinking. He saw jes' zactly what he said he had seen. He saw the man take off his cap to wipe the perspiration from his forehead—

“Oh, Wash, Wash ! Does the devil perspire?”

“And does he wear a cap ? Perhaps of asbestos?”

But Wash paid no attention to interruptions. He knew that his eyes could not have deceived him. He knew he was not drunk. He knew that he had seen exactly what he was trying to describe, and that it was enough to have scared almost any other man into fits—but he, himself was not so

easily frightened. He admitted that he had shivered all up and down his spine, but he had not fallen in a fit.

The tall man, who looked like the devil, had taken off his cap to wipe the perspiration from his forehead, and Wash saw that he had three eyes. "Yaas, Sah, three eyes! That's how I knowed I was alooking at the devil hisself. Two of the eyes was where a man's eyes ought to be, and the other was on his forehead, just a little above his nose. Yaas, Sah, and every eye was wide open, shining like fire, and a winking like mad!"

Wash added that he did not stay to see anything else. He had seen enough.

Of course no one believed him. Who could believe a crazy yarn like that? But—the reporters who rode out to the cemetery hoping to learn what Wash had seen, and perhaps get material for a story, got more than they expected. Percy Southdown's grave was open and beside it stood the coffin he had so lately occupied—and the coffin was empty.

Clearly a case of grave robbing, said Royalton, quite casually. Distressing, of course. No one likes to think of a relative being cut up by medical students. But this man had no relatives to make the proper fuss about it, and surely no more could be expected of those who had been his friends, considering what he had done to them, than what they had already done for him. They had seen him decently buried, once; why should they be expected to do the job over again! And so the matter was relegated to the background—at least for the time being. Had they only known when next it would be brought to their attention!

Beatrice Willis now became the favored subject of discussion among the more malicious of her friends. Mrs. Willis writhed when she thought what they were probably saying about her beautiful daughter. She knew what could happen to a member of their set who had the undesirable gift of exciting the envy of her associates; she herself had made it happen to others on more than one occasion—and it is true that chickens do have

a habit of coming home to roost. Not only was she made uncomfortable by the thought of what was being said, but the seeming indifference of Beatrice aroused her indignation. She was not in her daughter's confidence. She did not know exactly how Beatrice was feeling about the death of the man she had promised to marry, and so she went to the task of making the girl understand the situation with considerably less tact than she would otherwise have employed.

"I supposed it would be barely possible," she said, ironically, "for you to imagine what is being said about you!"

"Referring to Percy?" asked Beatrice, in a tone of voice that should have warned her mother that she was treading on dangerous ground.

"Referring to Percy," replied Mrs. Willis, heavily.

Beatrice laughed nervously. "It is a good joke on me, isn't it, mother?" she replied, in a manner she hoped was quite nonchalant. "After capturing the charming young Lord whom all the other girls wanted, and then to find out what he *was* or *wasn't*"—she went off into a peal of mechanical laughter. "And then"—wiping the tears from her eyes—if there were tears—"and then to find myself so suddenly—so very completely minus any cavalier at all—won't that simply be nuts for the girls? Of course, dear, I can imagine all you are trying to tell me, and a great deal more."

She was careful not to explain how the situation affected her. She preferred to keep that to herself.

"You seem to find the situation amusing." Mrs. Willis was indignant.

Beatrice stared, quite as if she were astonished at her mother's lack of perception. "Why, mother, don't you? Wouldn't you be amused if it had happened to any other girl? Of course you would! I can just hear you saying—well, pretty much what others are saying about me."

"Our own position is too tragic for me to think of hypothetical cases."

"Tragic?"

"As I said. Absolutely tragic." And then the mother lost her poise—became tearful and pathetic. "Oh, my little girl, you must understand—" she wailed, "you must! I've realized it for so long—been so frightened—I did my best, Beatrice—I wanted you to be happy—I hoped you need never know—Oh, my dear, my dear, I don't know what to do next! I don't know what is going to become of us now!"

Beatrice was alarmed. Her mother's face was a picture of despair. She had never seen her look like this—why, as if she were really terribly frightened. Afraid of what?

"Mother," she exclaimed, "what do you mean? What is the matter? You look so—so odd—not like yourself at all. Are you ill?"

"I am terribly worried. If — if Lord Percy — Percy Southdown—had been what we thought him—and you had married him—"

"Aren't you glad I didn't?" A curious light burned in the girl's eyes as she asked the question. In her heart crept the hope that perhaps her mother would understand—would sympathize—

"Of course I am glad—as it has turned out; but I had hoped that—you can't realize how I had hoped that—that he'd save us—"

"Save us? Save us from what?"

"Absolute ruin. We are in debt—I have no money—I don't know which way to turn."

"Aren't we well-to-do — rich?"

"We have never been rich. We have lived beyond our means. I had hoped you'd make a good marriage—before we reached the end of our resources—"

"If we had no money why have we been living as if we were able to afford all we have had?"

"Can't you understand? It was that you might have every opportunity. I was so sure you'd be able to come to the rescue—in time—now don't get on that expression! You can't be

stubborn, now! You've got to understand—and help. If you don't come to the rescue—”

“I shall look for work this very day.”

“Work!” What could you do in this day of trained efficiency? You don't know how to work. We have no money to give you the necessary training—and no time. In years you might be able to support yourself; but what about me? What about me, Beatrice? I've given everything I have—everything I am—to you. What are you going to do for me? Have you no thought for me? I do not believe you would deliberately desert your old mother.”

“Desert you—of course not. I'll help—somehow. I'll find a way. Don't shake your head as if you had no faith. What do you want me to do?”

“There is but one thing you can do. You must marry a man who can take the burden off my shoulders—some one who is able to support us both. You must do it soon. I'm breaking. I can't stand much more. I am putting it cruelly, I know; but you must understand; you must! Our situation is desperate.”

“But mother! Listen! Who am I to marry? Percy is dead—and even if—after the exposure— I could have forgiven him—” her voice broke. Tears were near the surface—but she forced them back.

“Don't waste time thinking of him. He isn't worth a thought—not even a condemnatory thought. We can't consider what might have been, Beatrice, or what we'd prefer. We confront a situation that must be met at once, that is why I want to talk to you about Franklin Potter——”

“Franklin Potter! Never.”

“Why not? He is respected—”

“You mean he was respected.”

“No one believes Percy knew anything against Franklin. If he had, he would have told what he knew. It was a sneaking trick to hint at something in a will—a will that he knew wouldn't

be read in time for Franklin to get back at him. It was on a par with all the rest that Percy Southdown did to us."

"Mother, I'd rather you wouldn't mention Percy—like that."

"You don't mean you are going to stand up for him—after all he did to you!"

"I'm not standing up for him, but I don't care to hear anything against him."

"Because you are letting what he said influence you against Franklin Potter."

"No, I don't think I am. But some one killed Percy—"

"I don't believe it. Anyhow, Franklin Potter didn't do it. Everyone exonerates him. You have no right to make such a horrible charge—"

"Oh, I didn't really mean it as a charge. I presume Franklin must be innocent since everyone says he is."

"Franklin Potter is really one of Royalton's leading citizens. He goes in the best society. He is an authority on subjects that most of our set are too lazy to read about. He has a good financial position—owns a paper that must be making a lot of money—and he is crazy about you."

"I am not the least bit crazy about him. I have told him never to come here again."

"What have you against him, omitting that absurd charge that you say yourself is not tenable?"

"Nothing that I can define; but I don't like him. I feel that he isn't genuine, somehow. I have felt that way about him since I first met him. I feel that he has a past of which he is too ashamed to speak. I feel that he is not sure about his future—his eyes have a look, sometimes, as if he felt spooks breathing on the back of his neck."

"All of which may sound smart to you, my dear—but have you said one thing that would be a good and sufficient reason why you should neglect the only opportunity you have to rescue me from certain ruin? Think it over. Let us not talk any more

about it now. I've tried to make you understand our position. I've done all I can. The matter now rests with you."

"I've said I'd never see him again—"

"But *I* have said nothing of the sort, and I shall let him know that his presence is desired at tea this afternoon."

"This afternoon! Oh, mother, what do you expect of me?" There were tears in her voice.

"Just treat him as if nothing had happened. You can do that much for me, can't you—at least until you've given yourself time to think over what I've told you?"

"Mother, I may as well confess it—I loved Percy, dearly—dearly—with my whole heart—" again her voice broke, and tears had to be forced back.

"Well, what of it? You can't possibly love him now."

"Nor can I love anyone else. I'm not going to let the world know I suffer—but, mother, can't you understand what I'm going through? I tell you, I loved Percy."

"I'm sorry, dear. I wish we weren't obliged to consider anyone else for a time. But we must, Beatrice, we must. Remember that I am suffering, too. I am suffering terribly. We can't bring Percy back. You would not marry him, even he were to rise from the grave this minute. You must forget him, dear, and help your mother, who would give her heart's blood to help you. And the only way you can help is by making a suitable marriage very soon."

CHAPTER II.

Afternoon tea was being served in the Willis home. Mrs. Willis understood how to make this simple act of hospitality appear like a real function, and her parlors were usually quite comfortably filled every afternoon between four and six. For a long time she had been able to entertain in no other way, but although her social circle might suspect that, they could not be certain, for none of them had ever gotten close enough to her to dare to question her about her private affairs. But they enjoyed going to her afternoon teas because they could be quite sure of meeting someone there whom they cared to see.

Mr. Willis had been dead twelve years. He was supposed to have left his family well provided for—but all that was known positively was that his widow kept up their beautiful old home and sent Beatrice to an expensive school, where she had been a leader of the girls best worth knowing.

Beatrice had personality and charm. She was good looking but not beautiful, although her dark gray eyes, abundant wavy hair of brightest chestnut hue, and her nearly perfect complexion had often brought her the beauty prize, in school and social events, that really might better have been claimed by more than one of her associates. She was well built, of the athletic type, and she excelled in out of door sports. She was vivacious and magnetic, but not of an emotional nature. She kept her inmost thoughts to herself. It was as easy to think of her marrying without love as to try to picture her dying of a broken heart. She had the reflective order of mind required to think things out in logical sequence, combined with a strength of will to carry out whatever purpose she might finally decide upon. The student of physiognomy would quickly see that she would be more likely to decide upon a course out of the ordinary, if left

to her own choice, than one prescribed by custom or conventionality.

"Couldn't we deny ourselves to guests just this once," she had pleaded. "Somehow, my brain feels all rumpled up, since our talk this morning, and I'd like time to pat it down a little."

"It wouldn't be wise, Beatrice, to make any change in our plans just now," was the mother's decisive reply. "If we must go down, let it be with flags flying."

"I see. Of course you are right about it. I'm trying to be a good sport. Are you really expecting Mr. Potter?"

"I am hoping he will come," was the significant response. "Beatrice, dear, I wish I could make you understand how very tired I am. I have had no rest since your father died, and I am terribly frightened. Our future looks hideous, when I try to picture it."

"Poor old Mumsy," replied Beatrice in her boyishly affectionate manner. "We'll just have to get busy, won't we, and see what can be done? I won't fail you—that is, unless you spring something too utterly preposterous."

"You are a good daughter," murmured the mother.

"Of course I am," rejoined Beatrice blithely. "Don't I know what the modern heroine would do? She'd remind you that she had her own life to live and was determined to live it in her own way. I've heard the girls talk—and I've done my share of the talking—and we all meant what we said, too."

"I know, dear. I've had my dreams."

"Really, Mumsy, you have much to be thankful for! Think of your wonderful daughter! Why I might be bringing forward a poor but beautiful young man, at this juncture, and introducing him as the only man I ever could or would love. You are missing all that. I might strike a most dramatic pose—" she struck at—"and declare. 'I will die, cru-e-el par-i-ent, ere I'll sell my soul for gold.' There! I thought I'd make you laugh, if I kept at it long enough. Now you're ready to be the perfect hostess, as per usual."

An hour later Beatrice had taken her place in the living room, charming in a simple gown of pale blue voile, and as gay as if she had not that day listened, for the first time in her life, to a financial problem that she could not forget and no possible solution for which could she imagine. She had greeted Franklin as nonchalantly as if she had never said she would not see him again.

"Tea, Mrs. Somers?" she asked, making her duties as hostess serve as an excuse to hasten from the side of the puzzled but enraptured Franklin.

"No tea, thanks!" replied Mrs. Somers, "it ruins my complexion."

"Some of these little cakes, then?"

"No; cakes are as bad as tea. Are you wondering why I never miss one of your mother's tea parties, when I always decline tea?"

"We are flattered because you never do."

"Listen, dear!" she pretended to whisper, "I come for the gossip. Nowhere else in the world can I hear what I want to hear—and told so delightfully!"

Beatrice laughed. "I'm not sure," she said, "but I ought to resent that. However, let me advise you to drag Mr. Potter away from mamma's chair, and take him into a corner. You know he usually has something of interest to tell."

"Did you ever know him to tell it before the crowd gathered? Franklin Potter can't be effective without an audience."

"He is theatrical," admitted Beatrice, "but he's entertaining—and for that we ought all to be grateful."

"Oh, I forgive him his sins three times a day if necessary. I like him. The trouble is, he doesn't seem to be greatly interested in me. He has eyes only for you and your mother. Tell me, dear, which one of you does Franklin want to marry? Whatever you reply shall be considered strictly confidential."

"Of course," mocked Beatrice, "it *would* be until the time came for you to score by telling it."

"Now, Beatrice! You know you do me a cruel injustice."

"If I do, I'll apologize—someday—when I'm convicted."

Beatrice turned to later arrivals, and Mrs. Somers wandered away in search of news that should make her afternoon seem worth while. She found Alfred Burton comfortably ensconced in the most inviting chair in the room. He looked lazy and insolent as she approached, and he feigned tragic terror.

"Must I stand?" he asked, plaintively.

"Why shouldn't you?" she retorted.

"I'm afraid you'll make me offer you this chair. I'm afraid you'll take it, if I leave it for a minute."

"It is the chair I like best. It is wonderfully placed; one can see all that goes on without turning one's head."

"Most observing of ladies! You have hit on the very reason why I mean to keep it."

"Very well, I'll try to be comfortable in this, since it happens to be near you." Burton reached out a long arm and drew the other chair close.

"Do be seated," he urged, earnestly, "and end my suffering. You can't think how my conscience stabs me—"

"No, I can't, because you haven't any conscience. You've told me so yourself many a time—yes, you have, when you saw fit to appear confidential, you know, and wished to warn me that you never expected to marry."

Burton laughed. "If I said that to you," he defended himself, "It is because I was frightened. My heart was in danger—"

"Nonsense! You have no heart."

"Well, whatever it is that supplies me with sentiment—"

"You know nothing about sentiment. You have no romance, no ideality, none of the finer feelings. You actually do not care whether you are liked or not—but your audacious speeches give you a following."

"I seem to have a few friends," he interrupted, mildly.

"I am really the best friend you have."

"You! My dear Mrs. Somers! You call yourself my friend, and all the time I have been afraid you wanted to marry me."

"I know you have, Alfred, and I've had a glorious time watching you struggle, but let me tell you something. If I had really wanted to marry you, we'd have been married quite some time ago. Who knows but we might be getting a divorce about now, and I'd have my hungry claws clasped about your money bags."

"From unseen dangers how mercifully have I been delivered!" ejaculated Burton with mock solemnity.

"You surely have. Do you wish to show proper appreciation?"

"If I can—without danger to myself."

"Then serve me with a nice dish of gossip, something new, if possible—but anyhow something."

"I'll do my best. Where shall we begin?"

"Tell me which one Franklin Potter wants to marry—the mother or the daughter?" with an expressive glance towards the beautifully appointed tea-table, where Mrs. Willis and her daughter were standing.

"It is easier to declare that he'll never get either one, and more to the point."

"Why not?"

"What does he have—particularly—to recommend him?"

"He is handsome, he carries himself well, he is well educated, he has a fascinating manner, and whatever he chooses to talk about, he is sure to make interesting."

"Yet how little is known of his past."

"That is true. He never says much about himself."

"He has lived in Royalton only about three years."

"And is already welcomed in our best society."

"Yes—but how did it happen? Who introduced him?"

"Why—I don't know. Queer, but I never thought to ask that question."

"That's what a winning personality does for a fellow. I'd never have gotten in as easily as that, had I come here a stranger, three years ago."

"Of course not; you don't put yourself out to be agreeable."

"But the atmosphere doesn't bristle with question marks, does it, whenever my name is mentioned?"

"Question marks?"

"My past is like an open book," with emphasis on the pronoun.

"Somehow, you don't seem quite friendly to poor Franklin Potter."

"On the contrary, I like him very much. But if I had a daughter as charming and in every way desirable as Beatrice Willis, I should not want her to marry friend Potter."

"Why not?"

"Promise not to tell?"

"Cross my heart—hope to die—"

"Well, I happen to know that previous to his opening his very palatial offices here in Royalton—he was a briefless barrister in London."

"In London! Who told you that?"

"Percy Southdown."

"Oh, Percy! And you believed him!—Do you still believe everything that man said?"

"He came from Yorkshire—and was not unacquainted with London."

"But he left his money to Franklin."

"In a way that would hurt Franklin more than anything else he could have thought of. Had his will not been made before Franklin's exposure of him, one would have said he had devised the most subtle revenge on record."

"Did Percy know why Franklin left London?"

"He did not say. So far as I can tell, no one knows how long he had sat among his law books waiting for clients that never came; no one knows why the sudden change from the dingy London office to his wonderful suite in the most preten-

tious building in our city, or how he managed to pay his fare over."

"Nonsense, he seems to have plenty of money."

"He certainly does—but it is whispered about that he does not have a bank account. It is true that he always pays his bills—but he never pays by check.

"Well—so long as he pays—isn't that to his credit?"

"It surely is, but somehow one doesn't think of him as having come to stay."

"Do you think Mrs. Willis knows this?"

"I think Franklin Potter will never become a member of her family until she has learned all there is to know about him. She is too shrewd for that."

By this time the usual guests had arrived, had chatted, had been served; some of them were now making ready to depart. Franklin Potter could not expect a larger audience if, as Mrs. Somers declared was true, an appreciative audience was necessary to whatever announcement he might be prepared to make. On this occasion, at least, the facts seemed to justify her cynicism.

"By the way, Burton," he said, raising his voice to reach that gentleman who still occupied his favorite chair at the further end of the room, "by the way, Burton, had you noticed the changes being made in the old Carrington property?"

"No; but I heard it had been sold. Do you happen to know who bought it?"

"A man named Hicks Jarou."

"Hicks Jarou?"

"He lived here, a short time, years and years ago, when he was a mere lad. I hear he is returning soon, and that he is making the Carrington place into a veritable mansion."

"He must be wealthy to do that," commented Mrs. Somers. "Do tell me that he is enormously wealthy, and unmarried, and handsome, and only a few years older than I am. I've

always declared I'd never marry an old man for his money—but a comparatively young man—well, I might be tempted.”

“I don't know his age,” replied Potter, “but he is not married. In fact, he is said to be a woman hater.”

“Good. That will add spice to the game. What about his bank account?” She bestowed a furtive wink on Burton as she asked the question. “A man can't be so very interesting,” she added, “without a comfortable bank account.”

“I am told that he left his legacy of a million dollars in a New York bank, when he disappeared some twenty-five or thirty years ago, and has never drawn a penny of it.”

“How has he lived without it?”

“No one knows.”

“But twenty-five or thirty years ago!” wailed Beatrice; “that would make him horribly old. You've taken all the romance out of your story.”

“Oh, I don't know,” drawled Mrs. Somers. “There seems to be plenty of mystery attached to the gentleman. With plenty of money and a spice of mystery, age doesn't matter so much.”

“Where did you say Mr. Jarou had been spending all those years?” asked Mrs. Willis.

“I didn't say,” replied Mr. Potter. “I don't know. I don't know of anyone who does know. One hears all manner of interesting stories about him, but who can say how authentic they are? I fancy, however, that he'll be worth meeting.”

“I believe I have met him in London,” she added, turning to her daughter, “just before your father and I were married.”

“Did you, indeed!” exclaimed Mr. Potter, with unfeigned interest. “That must be when he had just returned from Africa.”

“There was talk about Africa and diamond mines,” Mrs. Willis replied quite indifferently. “I don't know—I wasn't interested—all I recall is that he spent money like a prince.”

“What was he like?” demanded Mrs. Somers.

"He was about the handsomest man I ever met—of distinguished appearance—exceedingly polite—but so cynical—so absolutely sardonic in speech that he was not pleasant company."

"Cynical. Sardonic! He becomes more interesting every moment," exclaimed Mrs. Somers as rapturously as if she really meant it. "Beatrice, you must persuade your mother to invite him to a tea, as soon as he comes—but remember, hands off! He belongs to me."

"I'm just wondering," said Alfred Burton, "if I didn't hear a queer story about this man, Jarou, a great many years ago."

"Alfred! Do you own a memory so ancient as all that?" Mrs. Somers spoke in a tone of mock reproach.

"Do keep quiet, Evelyn," admonished Mrs. Willis, "and let Alfred tell his story." It was evident that Mrs. Willis wished to hear all that could be told of Hicks Jarou.

"Have you a story up your sleeve?" asked the irrepressible widow.

"Well, yes," admitted Burton—"if you care to hear it."

"Don't go, folks," urged Beatrice, "Alfred is going to tell us a story," and the guests who were about to depart turned back and found seats near Alfred Burton, who was known to be a delightful story teller, although difficult to get started.

"Another cup of tea all around," suggested Mrs. Willis. "Now, Alfred, begin, please."

"And make it spicy," added Mrs. Somers.

"You may not know," began Burton, "that when I was a young fellow I spent several winters in the logging camps of Northern Minnesota."

"Logging camps!" echoed Beatrice, incredulously. "Not you!"

"Not working!" exclaimed Mrs. Somers.

"No; making the other man work."

"That sounds more like it."

"To make others work was my proud privilege. The incident you bring to mind by your talk of Hicks Jarou occurred in 1870.

There were ten of us in camp that winter, a Swede, a Russian, a German, a Pole and an Irishman, none of whom were American born; also the north, east, south and west divisions of the United States were represented by characteristic specimens of civilization, each of whom had received an appropriate nickname. It was, of course, a foregone conclusion that the gentleman from the eastern states should be called Old Plymouth Rock, no matter how he might look or act; but it pleased us that the sobriquet fitted him so neatly."

"It wasn't Hicks Jarou, I hope—this Old Plymouth Rock," interpolated Mrs. Somers.

"No, Hicks Jarou wasn't there."

"Then why the careful description of the personnel of your party?"

"I'm trying to tell my story in my usual artistic style—and if you interrupt many more times, I'll put you out of the room."

"Good!" exclaimed Franklin Potter, "and if she comes in again, I'll put her out. Go on with your story, Burton, I like your logging camp."

"Old Plymouth Rock was the most taciturn man I ever knew, and about the only thing we were sure of, concerning his personal history, was that he seemed to be a devoted adherent of the Brahman religion."

"Brahman!" interrupted Beatrice. "Old Plymouth Rock a Brahman? Your plot begins to break."

"His plot is quite all right," defended Mrs. Somers. "Plymouth Rock stands for all kinds of Oriental beliefs."

"Did Hicks Jarou turn Brahman," queried Mrs. Willis.

"I'm not prepared to answer that question," replied Alfred. "If you'll allow me to proceed you may be able to decide that matter for yourselves."

"Of course, you'll proceed," said Mrs. Somers; "we'd kill you if you didn't."

"Go on, Alfred," commanded Beatrice, "and bear as hard as you can on the occult pedal."

"Old Plymouth Rock's religion," continued Alfred, "was of itself quite sufficient to arouse curiosity, in a camp like ours where reading was scarce, and where we seldom heard the news of the outside world before it was a month old.

"How was it possible, we asked ourselves, for an Old Plymouth Rocker—one whose ancestors had been numbered among the Puritans—to be so devoted a Brahman? From certain meager crumbs of information that we had picked up at unexpected moments, and had carefully preserved and pieced together, we were quite sure that he had at one time been a member of a Baptist Church—perhaps a deacon, although we could not agree as to that. We were, however, unanimous in the belief that he had not been a Brahman longer than five years, and that he had never wanted to be one, and would much prefer to be a Baptist. What, then, had brought about so great a change in our melancholy companion's religious beliefs?"

"But why should you have cared?" asked Mrs. Somers.

"Pay no attention to her," urged Beatrice. "She has no more imagination than a pussy cat."

"She calls me a cat," wailed Mrs. Somers.

"Stop calling names," order Burton, "and listen to my story. No one, unless he has spent an entire winter in a logging camp where mental diversions are of the crudest, can form any idea of the amount of interest this question afforded us, or of the eagerness with which we picked up and discussed any half-formed sentence which, simply because it was left unfinished, we hoped might prove a clue to our cherished mystery."

"I'll bet a box of gloves that I know the answer," interrupted Mrs. Somers. "Hicks Jarou was his teacher."

Mrs. Willis pointed a significant finger toward the door, and Mrs. Somers covered her saucy lips with a tiny lace handkerchief.

"One evening," continued Burton, "we were sitting around a glowing campfire, swapping yarns, when Old Plymouth Rock suddenly learned forward, holding up a skinny hand to attract

our attention. 'Have any of you ever seen Hicks Jarou?' he asked, and added quickly, 'but, of course, you haven't, or you'd all be crazy, same as me!'

"Well!" exclaimed Mrs. Somers, "I'll be damned."

"Your tone expresses what we felt very well indeed," smiled Burton. "We were too astonished to know what to say; but Old Plymouth Rock did not seem to be noticing us at all. 'I first saw Hicks Jarou,' he continued, 'in Boston where he was giving a talk in his laboratory to some scientists. He was talking about biology. I was interested in biology in those days, and Hicks Jarou knew more than anyone else about it.'

"Without doubt, I was the only other man in that camp who had ever heard the word, biology, but all the men were so under the spell cast by Old Plymouth Rock's unaccustomed manner that they nodded as intelligently as if that had been the first word they had learned to speak.

"'Men,' exclaimed Old Plymouth Rock, 'listen; listen, I say. I want you to know that I've been in hell. Hicks Jarou sent me there. When that lecture was concluded the other men left; but I remained behind. Fool that I was. I wanted to talk with Hicks Jarou—ask him a few questions—questions that any man would ask—and he sent me down to hell!'

"Alfred Burton, you are making that story out of whole cloth," protested Mrs. Willis.

"No, honestly, Norma! I'm telling it exactly as it occurred. I don't mean to say that Hicks Jarou did send the poor fellow to hell—but Old Plymouth Rock thought he did."

"But you are telling a story about a man who is soon to be a neighbor. It isn't fair, is it, to prejudice us against him, before he comes?"

"Don't let yourself be prejudiced," suggested Franklin Potter. "I've heard queer stories about Hicks Jarou—but I don't believe they are true."

"Where there is much smoke," said Beatrice, "one may expect to find a little fire."

"Go on, Alfred," urged Mrs. Somers. "Make it real spooky. Old Plymouth Rock had been sent to hell—"

"At least he said so," continued Burton. "He made the chills chase down our spines, because he looked as if he believed what he was saying. The fire began to burn low, and Ireland furtively touched the main log with his boot, but eight scowling brows warned him to desist. We felt that there must be no interruption, and so the shadows gathered more closely about us, and only the somber, white face of Old Plymouth Rock was clearly outlined. 'You devils,' he exclaimed, quite unexpectedly, 'why didn't you warn me? Some of you did know Hicks Jarou. Some of you knew what he could do to a fellow. I'll find out which one knew and failed to warn me—and then I'll kill him. I have a right to kill the man who failed to warn me against Hicks Jarou.' At this moment Ireland gave the main log an accurate kick that placed it just where it was most needed, and, to our relief, the fire sprang into new life. Old Plymouth Rock jumped to his feet, allowing a detached burning branch to fall into the place he had occupied, and stood before us looking unusually tall in the fitful firelight. 'I've got to tell it tonight,' he shouted, 'because I'll never have another chance. You've got to know what you allowed that fiend to do to me. When I went to Hicks Jarou's rooms, I belonged to the Baptist church, and I had no fear that the devil would ever get me. Hicks Jarou cast a spell over me—don't ask me what he did—I don't know—but he made my soul leave my body. I went into a strange land. I was alone. A voice told me that is the way it would be when I died—alone and lonely—and then I entered upon a long series of experiences so full of misery that human tongue can never find words to describe them. Men, I'd give this world and the next to forget them, but they haunt me day and night—they haunt me day and night. Every fear I had ever known—every fear that I had ever entertained for even one moment now became living reality, living reality, mind you—and all my life I have been full of fears! But I never really expected them to

be fulfilled—it seemed easier, somehow, to look on the dark side of life, and I followed in the line of least resistance.

I suffered the agonies of cancer, and died; I came to life only to be murdered. I died of consumption, leprosy, hydrophobia—every disease of which I had ever known fear. I was hung, I was torn apart by savages, I was buried alive. I was bankrupt and penniless. I saw my family slowly dying of starvation. My mother was cut to pieces before my eyes; my sons were killed by wild beasts—and each of these experiences caused me more cruel suffering than I had ever imagined in my most melancholy days, and I've suffered like that ever since. I've suffered like that ever since. And now, now you fiends, now some one has got to pay for it.' As he said this, he caught a burning brand from the fire and made straight for me—"

"Alfred Burton, have you no pity?" the story had been so frightfully realistic that most of the ladies were really unnerved, and all were pale.

"Don't you want to hear any more?"

"No," replied Franklin Potter, sharply. "We've had enough."

"I haven't," said Beatrice. "How long can you keep it up, Alfred?"

"Don't know. Shall I proceed?"

"Yes, yes, do," cried Mrs. Somers. "You're doing yourself proud, old scout."

"I'm not going to tell of the struggle we had to subdue the poor fellow," continued Burton, quietly. "We had only succeeded in getting the burning branch away from him when, 'Helloa there,' came a voice through the darkness, 'is this Alf. Burton's camp?' Before I could reply there came a sharp flash from a pistol, with a report that brought my heart into my mouth. Old Plymouth Rock had shot himself, and before we could reach him, he had fallen heavily to the ground."

"'He is the man we wanted,' said the stranger, dismounting from his horse beside the slowly stiffening form of our com-

panion, 'and the worst ride I ever took has been in vain. He must have recognized my voice. I ought not to have called out, for I knew he was here.' It seems that Old Plymouth Rock had escaped from an asylum for the insane just before joining our crew, and for three months our lives had been in danger, for he had formed a habit of killing men who, he believed, had introduced him to Hicks Jarou."

"What a horrid story!" exclaimed Mrs. Willis. "Do you believe he ever saw Mr. Jarou?"

"My informant from the asylum said he had worked in Jarou's laboratory for a time."

"Well, that doesn't prove anything against Jarou," defended Franklin Potter.

"Not a thing."

"Why did you tell that story," demanded Mrs. Willis, accusingly.

"Weren't you all anxious to hear something thrilling about our new neighbor? Haven't I done my best to gratify you?"

"I knew you were making it up, all the time," replied Mrs. Willis. "Don't you believe a word of that outrageous story," she added, turning to her other guests. "If the man who is coming to Royalton is the Hicks Jarou I once knew, you will find him a cultured gentleman whom you will enjoy meeting."

"And you will invite him here, and give us all an opportunity to meet him?" inquired Mrs. Somers.

"I shall invite him—yes—but he may not care to come."

"When I meet him," said Mrs. Somers, "I shall tell him just what Alf. Burton tried to do to him."

"What did I try to do to him?"

"You tried to prejudice us against him."

"By telling a wonderfully romantic yarn about him? Think I'd have done that—to create prejudice in the mind of a woman?"

"It wouldn't have worked, would it?" said Beatrice. "It had the opposite effect on me. I'm positively seething with excitement."

"Don't think he'll send you to Heaven as he sent that poor fellow to hell," warned Mrs Somers. "Just understand—all of you—that I spoke first! I am to be the recipient of any little attentions that Mr. Hicks Jarou may be disposed to offer."

CHAPTER III

"Thank Heaven, that's over," sighed Mrs. Willis, as the last guest left her home.

"It wasn't as bad as I had feared it would be," replied Beatrice, cheerfully.

"How did you get on with Franklin?"

"All right. I wasn't particularly nice; neither was I nasty. He'll come again."

"Yes; I think he will. However, Beatrice, you need make no promise for a day or two."

"No? Why, I thought it was imperative. You told me the mortgage on our home amounted to twenty-five thousand dollars—and was due in a fortnight!"

"Yes. And how quickly a fortnight passes—sometimes."

"Mother, why didn't you tell me all this before?"

"I hoped you need never know. Remember, dear, you were engaged to be married to Lord—to Percy—and we believed—"

"Yes, mother; can't we let that pass?"

"I think you should understand that on the strength of that engagement I had every hope of getting the mortgage renewed. I am quite sure it could have been managed."

"I understand. And now you are hoping Franklin Potter can help us out."

"He seems to have plenty of money—and he is crazy about you. Anyone can see that."

"Alfred Burton believes he is a remittance man."

"He does! When did Alfred tell you that?"

"This afternoon. It sounds reasonable. Franklin is English, and sometimes English families do get rid of undesirable sons in the way Alfred suggests."

"But I can't see why anyone should consider Franklin undesirable—and I don't believe Alfred has any grounds for his assertion."

"Alfred says he has been told that Franklin makes up a statement of account every month and sends it away, and every month he receives a draft on a New York bank."

"But I don't believe he'd have to meet his expenses in any such way. Why, the fees he gets for his genealogical work must be simply enormous—enough to more than cover his expenses. You know Franklin is recognized as an expert along that line."

"Especially since he did what he did to Percy."

"Yes. That alone has made him a power in Royalton. We'll never need to worry about being bamboozled as Percy Southdown bamboozled us. In fact, you'll see that from this time on, no foreign aristocrat will be received in Royalton until Franklin Potter says so."

"I wonder where he gets all his information about people," mused Beatrice.

"I believe he must know a great many titled people quite intimately," replied her mother. "Now that it has been suggested, I shouldn't be at all surprised if he were himself a younger son of some powerful house. Of course, if that could be proved—and his remittances were large enough—one might take chances on an unexpected future inheritance. I've read of more than one remittance man who was called home to become lord of the manor."

"Well, is it understood that we are to take chances?"

"Oh, my little girl, I know you hate the very idea!"

"Never mind me, Mumsey. You did what you did with your money just to give me a good time—and no other girl has had a happier girlhood. And it really doesn't matter so much whom I marry; I fancy one man is pretty much like another man—and they are all rather disgusting."

"Don't be cynical, dear."

"I'm not. I had hoped I shouldn't have to marry until—until I'd forgotten what Percy made me believe—but never mind; even if I'm married I'll manage to forget the real life in the more satisfactory life of the student. Whatever happens, I'm going to study about things that interest me."

"Not a bad idea," replied the mother, who evidently had not been paying very strict attention to what her daughter was saying. "Anyhow," she added quite irrelevantly, "you'd better not give Franklin an answer for a day or two—in case he should propose."

"Oh, I don't know about that. If I have a duty to perform I always like to get it over with as soon as possible."

"Better wait a day or two," repeated Mrs. Willis. "I've just had a new thought. Perhaps you won't have to do it after all."

Beatrice was informed by the maid that the car was at the door, and that she was due at her dressmakers. Mrs. Willis was left alone with her thoughts.

"I wish I could know what he is like today," she murmured, and the thought brought before her a mental photograph of Hicks Jarou as he had looked when she met him in London thirty years ago.

"He was very much interested in me," was her next thought, "and he has never married. Perhaps he has not liked anyone else as well. I believe I'll write him. Yes, that is the thing to do. I'll ignore what he said when we parted and assume that we are to be good friends. He couldn't hold a grudge all these years. He'll see that Beatrice is like me."

Mrs. Willis acted on the impulse. She ran out to the mail box and posted the letter, herself, and she made haste so as to have it done beyond recall before Beatrice should return. She had really meant to do this from the moment she had heard that Hicks Jarou was coming to live in Royalton, and that he was wealthy and unmarried. She had managed to get his address from Franklin Potter without appearing to be

particularly interested, and she had rejoiced inwardly when she had learned that he was in New York, and she could hope for an early reply to her letter.

It came promptly. There was a bank draft for twenty-five thousand dollars and a short curt little note of two sentences which told her that he was glad to be able to accomodate her, and that they would arrange details as to interest and date of payment when he reached Royalton. Not another word. It did not begin with her name, or end with his. Just two sentences!

A spasm of fear clutched the heart of Norma Willis when she saw that draft. Her first impulse was to return it—but the mortgage came due so very soon. It would feel so good to be free from worry for even a few days. Of course, she would owe Hicks Jarou—he might insist upon taking a mortgage on her home—he might foreclose—but that couldn't happen for a little while. He might become interested in Beatrice! He might prove to be very desirable! One should not believe silly stories told about one's friends by men like Alfred Burton. Hicks Jarou was a scientist, a very great biologist, and scientists were always criticized by those whose brains were too feeble to grasp scientific facts. She did not pretend to know much about biology; but she was quite sure it was something one need not be ashamed to know about, and that biologists couldn't send anyone to hell, not really, no matter how much they'd like to do it. It would be worth a great deal to be able to walk into a certain office, where one was quite sure to be met with a frown, and put down one's personal check for twenty-five thousand dollars, just as a hateful lawyer was making ready to inform one of his client's instructions concerning one's beautiful home!

Mrs. Willis returned to her home a few days later, looking years younger than she had in a long time.

"Well, dear," she said, "we'll be able to entertain our friends yet a little longer. We can still look the world in the face."

"You don't mean it! What has happened?"

"I saw the man who holds the mortgage. He is in no hurry to foreclose." Why didn't she tell her daughter that the mortgage had been paid?

"But he'll foreclose sooner or later, won't he?"

"Not if some one else assumes control here. Let's not cross that bridge before we come to it."

A little later, she said, quite casually, "I wonder when Mr. Jarou is expected? We must be the first to invite him—for old acquaintance' sake, you know, and I want you to be nice to him."

In a second this thought flashed through the girl's mind, "Mother wants me to marry Hicks Jarou. I actually believe she would let me marry that cruel old hypnotist—or whatever he is—who makes people go crazy."

"Mother," she asked, suddenly, "were you and father very much in love when you married?"

"Your father was very much in love with me. We got on exceedingly well together."

"Was father wealthy?"

"When we were married—yes. But he made foolish investments—and he failed to make me secure, as he should have done."

There was a bitterness in the mother's voice that was unpleasant. It warned Beatrice to change the subject, which she did. The evening passed pleasantly enough, and Mrs. Willis did not guess the trend of her daughter's thought.

"Why doesn't mother marry him, herself? She didn't care much about father—yet they got on very well together. She and Hicks Jarou must be nearly the same age, and if he's wealthy and could give her everything she wants! I believe she'd like that. Maybe I could help it along. Then I could take up stenography, and be independent."

Then Beatrice tried to realize what life had meant to her mother all through the years while she was at school and care-free.

“Poor mother!” she thought. “It hasn’t been much fun bringing me up. After all, why should she marry again if she doesn’t want to? It is my business to look after her, now. But if they happened to like each other — and I could be free to work—”

Meanwhile, the curious members of Royalton’s smart set were busily, but secretly, at work trying to learn something about the man who was soon coming to live among them, and although their efforts were not altogether successful, they had learned enough to understand that one who has never heard of Hicks Jarou had better think twice before admitting it. He was too important to be ignored, and if one didn’t happen to understand what made him important, why, just better keep still and wait for a cue.

If you are a comfortable, rather narrowminded housewife, giving most of your time to your home and family, and the remainder to your church, you will not be expected to have heard of this man, Jarou. That’s all right, too. You are just as well off, and no one will raise an astonished eyebrow when you confess your ignorance. But if you are interested in the startling discoveries of today, and wish to get a line on what is likely to happen any time within the next ten years, then you cannot ignore the investigations of this scientist, even though they may seem to you to have been instigated by the devil.

Royalton is not to be criticized for undue curiosity. There is no one who has ever heard of Hicks Jarou who would not like to know more about him. There are not many among the cautious class who would care to know him personally. The majority would prefer to get their information second hand. They’d think it safer. The Mother Eves of the land would find it “terribly interesting” to listen to stories of this singular man, and perhaps shudder a little, quite comfortably—as a child does when listening to ghost stories,—but if they met him face to face, after listening to stories told by those who

professed to know all about him, or who, like Alfred Burton, had only heard of him, their first thought would be—"what awful thing will he do to me?"

One who sought information from those who have heard a great deal about Hicks Jarou,—good people who believe they are telling the truth—would soon become possessed of the following items—all fairly well vouched for as facts,—and all misleading:

He has never been young.

He will never grow old.

He has lived on this earth for a thousand years.

He discards a body when it begins to show signs of wear, and gets another. How? Nobody knows.

He has discovered how to mend parts of his body, as they wear out, so that it will last indefinitely.

He was never born like other people.

He couldn't die if he wanted to.

He owns an island which boasts a tiny lake with marvelous rejuvenating powers.

He can make gold, and precious stones.

He can do what he pleases with any human being under the sun.

He can read your mind, and always know what you are thinking.

And so on, ad infinitum.

How do such stories get started? No one would dream of weaving them about the name and personality of the placid housewife who has never heard of Hicks Jarou. Nor about one of our presidents. Edison? Ford? Burns? Well, perhaps.

Allow me to quote from one who knows: Hicks Jarou had parents. He was born into this world like any other baby. He was an extraordinarily beautiful child, and it was soon discovered that he was different in that he possessed certain characteristics not well understood by average people, and so not mentioned as natural gifts. There are natural gifts that

one would not accept as a gift, if one could help it. Who wants to be very different from the common herd? Certainly the little boy—the little, lonely, misunderstood Hicks Jarou—would not have been, himself, if he could have had anything to say about it.

“One Who Knows” is willing to swear to this:

Mary Hicks, an ardent churchwoman of the middle years of the nineteenth century, married Richard Jarou, an eminent material scientist—if the phrase may be allowed—whose days had been spent in a tireless effort to discover new biological truths. The wedding took place in 1848.

Hicks Jarou was the only child of this strangely mated pair—one of whom did not believe in the existence of matter, while the other believed in nothing else. Hicks was born in 1850.

When but three years of age the child, Hicks, could name all of the bones in the human body. At the age of five he had discovered a ganglion of nerve cells which had been overlooked by all other students of anatomy. At ten he carved a perfect human skeleton from a stick of stove wood. At eighteen he began the long series of experiments that were destined to prove the possibility of combining well known chemical compounds to form a human body so perfect that it could not be detected as an imitation, but passed current as the genuine article.

At the time we make acquaintance with Hicks Jarou, it had been said of him that he could mix protoplasm as skilfully as the housewife mixes bread; that he had an intimate acquaintance with the atomic world; that he understood cell development so well as to be able to change the nature of cells reproducing by spontaneous duplication, and compel them to adopt, instead, the process known as *endogenous nucleal fission*! It would seem that a scientist who had gone as far as that, had the whole scheme of creation within his grasp!

For the wonderful skill in biological research with which he had been endowed, Hicks Jarou gave his father full credit,

but he realized it was to his pious mother that he owed his great wealth. It was she who had taught him that there was a never-ending supply for those who could successfully connect themselves with it, and his inventive mind quickly found the key to that connection. Hicks Jarou was indeed fabulously wealthy. In one thing only did his life seem barren and that was love.

Hicks Jarou was ten years old when his father's spirit left its casement. Six weeks later his mother joined her husband. No one cared for the child thus left alone, enough to take him into their home. He had no relatives. He was left in care of the Trust Company who had for some years administered his father's wealth. The Trust Company sent him to an excellent school for boys, where he was promptly consigned to a class by himself by all the ordinary little boys who did not care for a comrade who knew so much more than they did.

It was during the long hours when the other boys refused to play with him that he amused himself by fashioning the perfect human skeleton from the stick of stove wood. He thought it the most beautiful toy any boy had ever made. He showed it to his schoolmates, hoping it might win their esteem. If only one of them would like it, and want to chum with the boy who carved it! Life must seem wonderful to a boy who had a chum. But no; they were interested only for a moment. They did not see that the toy was well made. They did not care. If it had been some sort of workable toy, any common thing that the average little boy could have understood—Hicks might have won a friend; but who cared for a wooden skeleton!

The boys raced away to their play. Poor little Hicks Jarou gazed after them with tear-filled eyes. What was the trouble? Why did the boys run away from him? Why didn't they let him play with them? He studied the wooden skeleton curiously. Why didn't the boys like it? Wasn't it well done? Could he have done better? Perhaps. However, he liked it very much, just as it was — only it wasn't companionable.

He was so very lonely! He wished he could find some one to whom he could give his wooden skeleton—some one who would see how very fine it was, and like him because he had made it.

After this incident, the little lad was left to himself still more sedulously, for such is the unstudied cruelty of children. There was nothing he could do by way of amusement, so far as he knew, except to dissect bugs and birds and various small animals, with a view to studying the arrangement of their internal economy, and trying to learn the constituents of the various organs.

Our hero learned so readily that he seemed fairly to gallop through the various preparatory schools to which the officials of his perplexed guardian, The Trust Company, sent him, and he was ready for college long before any college wished to receive him. But he was not denied admittance. There was no good reason why he should not be received, except that he was much younger than the other students,—and that was not deemed sufficient.

Hicks looked forward to college life with hope and enthusiasm. Men in college couldn't possibly be heartless and thoughtless as small boys were apt to be. In college, he would find a true friend—a jolly boy who would understand him, and perhaps be interested in the practical application of biological facts.

He entered college and almost immediately he was accorded that curious aloofness that youth deals out to those who are not like themselves. The professors saw, but could not help the situation. A boy whose dearest possessions consisted of several glass jars, in each of which reposed a hand-made heart covered by some mysterious liquid,—was it hand-made? The boy let it be so understood—but—every heart was actually beating! It was uncanny, to say the least. How could such a boy hope to be happy in the average college!

Hicks Jarou ran away from college. He disappeared. He was not heard from for years. Meanwhile, his fortune remained

with the Trust Company, where it increased safely and steadily, and the Trust Company's advertisements for one Hicks Jarou were published abroad quite in vain, for they failed to bring him back, although rumors concerning him had occasionally drifted in. One day, many years later, he unexpectedly wrote the Trust Company that he would soon call for an accounting. It had not been difficult for him to prove his identity. The fact that he had so often been heard of in various parts of the world was proof that he still lived, even though he had always disappeared before his old friends could communicate with him. They had tried, in a way, but perhaps not as effectively as they might have done had not the stories told of him been so varied and so odd—perhaps repellant is the better word—that the Trust Company hesitated about pushing their investigations too far. They finally decided to await his commands, which was proof of their wisdom, for Hicks Jarou was irritated when questioned about his affairs. They were in charge of his fortune, and he trusted them. He did not need the money they were investing for him because he was making a still greater fortune. When he had accomplished certain things—made a certain stupendous day dream come true—established himself as the greatest biologist the world had ever known—then he would return to those sections of the world where the little boy, Hicks, had been made to suffer.

CHAPTER IV.

Very quietly—without formal announcement of his intended arrival, Hicks Jarou had taken possession of his palatial new home. He arrived at night, unexpectedly, and they who chanced to see him alight from the train had no idea that the stranger was in any way illustrious; but they spoke of his distinguished appearance.

Hicks Jarou's presence did not become known to Royalton for some time after his arrival, for he had actually been living in his own home when Percy Southdown had shot himself, although it happened that he was at his New York residence when Mrs. Willis' letter had arrived, and his reply had been sent from there.

The old Carrington place was being transformed from a very large and very ordinary looking modern residence into a sort of palace that resembled the celebrated Golden Temple of India. It had not been difficult to thus transform it, and it looked at home in its surroundings. A small artificial lake had been put in on the lawn, the waters of which lapped the foundations of the house. This, of course, was a reproduction of the Sacred Tank before the Golden Temple, but the citizens of Royalton did not know that. To enter the house, one must reach it from a side street. The place appealed to the imagination of even the most prosaic. When any Royalton citizen ventured to compliment the owner on his work of rehabilitation, he gravely informed them that the house was now absolutely modern—as if that were all that mattered in this prosaic world. It certainly was modern in that the very day when *The Royalton Star* carried the belated announcement of Hicks Jarou's arrival, it cast off its air of mystery and somnolence and became alive

with the bustle and excitement of getting settled, just as any other modern home would submit itself to ordinary, every-day-citizen ownership.

It transpired that Mr. Jarou had brought most of his servants with him. They were fine looking people, of rather dusky coloring, and it appeared that none of them could speak English. The guesses as to their nationality were many and varied. Mr. Jarou could have told them that they were Sikhs—a separate sect of Hindus, who were with him for experience and education. They were dissenters from the practices of the older Hindu faith, and they believed that he, Jarou, would eventually take them to an island in the South Seas that he had purchased for that purpose, where they could establish themselves and gather their most dearly beloved friends about them. They came of superior stock, had a keen sense of dignity and honor, and realized the compliment paid them by their master when he selected them for the special training that the public officers of their island home should have.

Although Hicks Jarou's household showed very plainly that its members did not care to have communion with any of their neighbors, they soon discovered that in this new and very democratic country it was quite impossible to get settled without admitting an occasional outsider — some very dreadful personage called a mechanic—who could teach them how to care for the puzzling fixtures that were designated under the head of modern conveniences. And it was not long before these uncouth intruders upon the privacy of the Hicks Jarou home were busily circulating a very strange story.

They declared that this man, Jarou, had one fellow with him who was a mighty curious specimen! He was tall and dark and thin and wiry, and all the servants obeyed him quickly when he spoke. He wore a black silk skull cap pulled down over his eyebrows—and when it was pulled down he wasn't a bad looking fellow at all. But sometimes it got awry—sometimes it got pushed half way up his forehead, and then he

hastily pulled it into place. But on one never-to-be-forgotten occasion he had not been able to pull it in place so quickly that no one saw—in fact, three of their number swore they had seen—what no one could really believe! It was simply awful! And then remembering the poor negro, Wash, the grave digger, and how cruelly his story had been ridiculed not so very long ago, they told the remainder of their story in a whisper, and only to friends whom they considered especially trustworthy. It was to the effect that this tall, dark thin man who bossed the other servants had three eyes! Yes, sir, three eyes. The third was concealed under his skull cap—when the cap was not awry.

And so it happened that among the work people of Royalton, Runjeet Singh became known as Three Eyes, except when spoken to, or when referred to in the presence of Hicks Jarou, but naturally the social set knew nothing about that for quite some time.

For many centuries, occultists have known of the third eye, which was, in olden times, quite an accepted part of the human anatomy, and was known to designate those who had been born with special gifts—such as second sight, or the power of divination. This eye is located just below the center of the forehead, and above the bridge of the nose. Although it was once as much in evidence in these gifted human beings as are the two eyes with which we are familiar, there is little doubt that, as divination gradually became unpopular, this eye was not put to the use for which it had been intended and so slowly but surely eliminated itself—just as other parts of the human frame have done when left unused. Hicks Jarou, however, had believed this third eye might be cultivated and again brought to the surface of the face. The idea fascinated him. Not that he thought a third eye any improvement, but he had the scientist's desire to play with nature. And so when he chanced to save the life of a new born babe, whose un-wed mother had determined must be destroyed, he decided to keep the baby for experiment.

The experiment was successful from the experimenter's point of view, but it resulted in untold embarrassment to the victim, for his sensitiveness upon the point of his optical singularity made him shy of his fellow man, and he never appeared in public if he could help it.

Hicks Jarou did not abandon the poor persecuted child, but gave him a home and taught him all he cared to learn. Runjeet Singh developed many strange powers and became a learned occultist, but still remained with Jarou as a sort of upper servant. He had an original way of obtaining solitude by solemnly offering anyone, who wearied him, the great privilege of shaking hands with the devil, and so it happened that many a scoffer who strenuously declared his unbelief in a personal devil would immediately find a good reason for a prompt departure. Few of us really believe in a personal devil—Oh, no!—but just the same if Runjeet Singh had made his offer to us, we would have decided to take no chances. One might know beyond all doubt that Three Eyes could not possibly produce the devil for us to shake hands with, yet there was always the chance that he might. One could not be sure as to the extent of the powers of such a man, and always his offer was disquieting because it was made with an air of confidence that could not be ignored. But all this gossip was kept pretty closely among a chosen few of Royalton's working class—self-respecting people who objected to ridicule, yet who, like poor Wash, knew that they saw “jes zactly what they said they seen.”

It was a long time before the leisure class of Royalton learned of the part Hicks Jarou had played in Runjeet Singh's tragedy. But he had not been there long before he began receiving commendation for his generosity in taking the poor boy into his home and educating him, and then giving him suitable employment. Mrs. Willis was one of the most enthusiastic, and her emphatic expressions of approval were joked about among her friends, who declared that Mr. Jarou did not look like one who

put himself out to do good to humanity, and if she saw him as a philanthropist, it must be because she was more deeply interested in him than she had allowed them to suppose.

As soon after his arrival as she could, without danger of exciting comment, Mrs. Willis sent Hicks Jarou a note of invitation to her next afternoon tea.

"Please come early," she wrote, "that we may have an opportunity to renew our friendship of—let's not say how many years ago—before the other guests begin to arrive."

Hicks Jarou came early. He made a striking figure as he stood in the doorway for a moment before entering the room. One who observed comprehensively would have noticed that he was not much above medium height, that his hands and feet were rather too small, and his head a little too large for his body; but the ordinary person would have seen only that he had large, dark, melancholy eyes, with the steadfast gaze of the scientific observer, and a shock of beautiful white curly hair, that softened a rather harsh expression produced by lips too firmly closed. The physiognomist would have made mental note something as follows: "Nose a little too well rounded at the side, showing an excess of the faculty known as constructiveness, which sometimes leads to ruthless research and sometimes to chimerical invention." Had he known of the gossip concerning the man he would have quickly decided that Hicks was just the type of scientist who would have tried to produce a third eye in a helpless baby's face.

Mrs. Willis had been dreading this first meeting, not so much because she had borrowed twenty-five thousand dollars of him, as because she had an uncomfortable recollection of their last meeting, and she feared he might not have entirely forgotten it.

She was the first and only girl to whom the boy Hicks had paid attention. They had met in London. He was a lonely boy who had never been able to make friends. He was shy, but she had made him feel at ease. She chanced to be without an escort, and she allowed him to take her to all the expensive

places. She played with him quite heartlessly, led him on until he overcame his shyness sufficiently to propose marriage, and then she laughed at him.

"You really didn't imagine I would marry you," she had said, flippantly; "you knew we were just flirting."

"No," he had replied with dangerous calm, "I did not know that. Why am I not fit to marry?"

"Because you are not human. You are a walking dictionary. You are a personified collection of biological facts. You are as companionable as a book on Chinese philosophy."

"I thank you," he had said gravely, "until you are better paid. Please remember that some day you will be better paid."

Then he had looked at her steadily for what had seemed to her like hours—and a red fire had formed in his great, black eyes—had flamed up, receded, smouldered, flamed up again. Then he was gone without another word—not so much as a nod by way of farewell. He was gone, and she was left with a deathless memory of that curious light in his eyes, flaming up, receding, smouldering, springing to life again. It was uncanny. He had left her trembling with fear—a fear that reason told her was groundless. Of course, he would not do anything to harm her. Why should he? How could he? A girl had a right to decide against a lover—and one must accept a man's attentions in order to decide at all. But she now wished she had not been quite so outspoken. She could have prevented that proposal had she tried. She had known all along that she did not care for him. She might have shown herself more considerate. She had often wished she had never met him—hoped she would never meet him again—prayed to forget the strange red flame that had danced in his somber black eyes.

The scene recurred to her in a flash as she advanced to welcome him to her home, and her hand trembled as she extended it, because like a flash the red flame had sprung into his eyes when he looked at her, and then he had quickly looked away.

He appeared not to see her extended hand. He bowed very low, and with wonderful grace.

"This is a beautiful room, Mrs. Willis," he said, and his voice betrayed the appreciation of a trained artist.

"We like it," replied Mrs. Willis, quite simply. "My husband and I worked hard for months to dress this house to suit us."

"This room is quite perfect."

"Yet I have friends who pronounce it dingy—think it needs re-decorating—"

"Don't allow it to be touched. I prefer it as it is. Are all the other rooms as exquisite?"

"They are all different. Each has its own individuality. When my guests are gone, I will show you over the house, if you wish."

"I am here to see it."

What had become of the opening conversation she had so carefully rehearsed! Norma Willis was so bewildered that her heart was not acting normally. It fluttered so that it made her feel dizzy. She had meant to open with a graceful allusion to friendships of other days, to tell him how glad she was to see him again, to impress him with the fact that she was a queenly hostess and he was an honored guest, and in the twinkling of an eye he had made her feel like a real-estate agent with a house that must be sold.

Beatrice entered, all in white. Her dark gray eyes were wide with curiosity, and she studied the stranger with the unselfconscious gravity of a child as she slowly crossed the room.

"My daughter Beatrice, Mr. Jarou."

"Ah!" he clasped her proffered hand in both of his. "You looked like a tall white lily out for a promenade, as you came through that door," he said with a smile.

When Hicks Jarou smiled like that, which did not happen frequently, his face was transformed. He became attractive, almost god-like in appearance, and one wanted to say or do something to bring another such smile. As a rule, his smile

was sardonic and made one uncomfortable. Beatrice would never be able to see Hicks Jarou exactly as others saw him, because her first impression of him was irradiated and burned deep by his transforming smile.

"I am so glad we are going to like each other, Mr. Jarou," she said, impulsively.

"So am I — if we are," he replied. "I do not make friends readily," he added. "I have been lonely all my life—and long ago I ceased hoping for a friend, and ceased believing in friendship."

"I'm going to show you how mistaken you have been."

"Perhaps," was the doubtful reply, quickly followed by, "but I'm willing to be shown," and another glimpse of the wonderful smile.

Afterward, Beatrice wondered at the impulse that had led her to talk to this man as she might have talked to a youth of her own age—gaily, unaffectedly, as if she enjoyed it—as she really had.

"He is not a bit as I had thought he would be," she declared. "He is by far the handsomest man I have ever met, the most interesting, and the best mannered."

"I wish I could share your enthusiasm," her mother replied. "I must confess he got on my nerves."

"You and he didn't seem to hit it off very well. I wondered about that. And why did you take him all over the house?"

"He wanted to see it. The living-room seemed to make a great impression—"

"Nonsense. His own home must be much more beautiful."

"More expensive, perhaps—but not mellow in tone as ours is. It must look shiny—like copper-toed shoes."

"Was he impressed with ours,—as a whole?"

"Seemed to be. Said he hoped I might live to enjoy it a great many years."

"I heard him say that. Don't you think his eyes had a queer expression when he said so?"

"How do you mean—queer?" asked the mother, wondering if anyone else could see what was so horribly plain to her.

"Why, when he said that, he looked right at you, and there seemed to be a flickering red light in his eyes. Didn't you see it?"

"I noticed that his eyes are peculiar," replied the mother evasively, and then sought to change the subject. "I think our afternoon was a success on the whole, don't you?"

"Indeed yes—the most entertaining in weeks. Mr. Jarou made himself very popular."

"Mrs. Somers provided the opportunity. What was that ridiculous story he was telling her?"

"Mrs. Somers asked him if he were so wonderfully well versed in occult science as he was said to be—such an impertinent question—"

"Occult Science! Why he is a biologist."

"That is the reply he made Mrs. Somers. And she wouldn't take a hint. 'Don't try to pull the wool over my eyes!' she said. 'I've been told that you are more occultist than anything else!'"

"What did he say to that?" asked Mrs. Willis.

"He looked at her with the oddest smile," continued Beatrice—"as if she were an impertinent child whom he'd like to spank. 'You've been told that?' he asked, 'well then, I'll admit it, since I make it a rule not to quarrel with the gossips.'"

"Something of a slap in the face, wasn't it?" asked Mrs. Willis.

"I should have considered it so, but Mrs. Somers didn't seem to. She just laughed and said she wished she knew how much of the talk about him she was to believe."

"I wonder how she dared! Was he angry?"

"He didn't appear to be. He replied that of course he didn't know exactly what the gossips were saying, but he would confess that he really could not enjoy a meal unless he ate it at midnight, by moonlight, and with nine times seven black cats seated around the table. And when the moon was in the first quarter his principal dish was rattlesnake chowder; when the

moon was full, he had roast monkey brought on with its hands crossed on its breast; but when the moon was in the last quarter, nothing suited him except a negro baby cooked on the spit."

"It was a horrid reply," snapped Mrs. Willis.

"Wasn't it? But Mrs. Somers deserved it. She has been entirely too ready to report all she hears concerning him."

"I'm puzzling my mind about Franklin Potter," said Mrs. Willis. "Before Mr. Jarou came to Royalton, he appeared to know a great deal about him; but this afternoon they met like strangers."

"I noticed that," replied Beatrice, "and yet I'm sure they are not strangers."

"How can you be sure of that?"

"There was nothing in Mr. Jarou's manner, when you introduced them, to make me think so; but Franklin aroused my suspicions,—he looked so uncomfortable—and—I can't quite define it—but almost as if he were afraid."

"Don't overwork your imagination," retorted Mrs. Willis. "Why should he—or anyone—be afraid of Mr. Jarou?"

"He may have good reason to believe some of the creepy stories told about that fascinating gentleman."

"I thought you liked Mr. Jarou?"

"I do. He is mysterious—and so—so detached! He is different from anyone else I've ever known. He makes your very correct afternoon teas seem quite snappy. He is worth cultivating, and my hat's in the ring."

"Don't, Beatrice! You are excited—overwrought. It makes you appear reckless and unrestrained."

"Why, mother, I thought I was pleasing you. I've been entertaining the idea that you would like me to marry the gentleman."

"Not except as a last resort," replied the mother, with a groan.

"But why not? They say he has untold millions—"

"He is old enough to be your father."

"All right. Make him my father. I wouldn't object to a daddy as picturesque as he is. And I'm sure he'd give me anything I wanted. Go in and win, mother, and end your financial troubles."

"I'd prefer the debtor's prison," replied the mother passionately. "I don't like Hicks Jarou. I hate him. I wish I hadn't invited him here. I wish we need never meet him again."

"We need never invite him again, if that is the way you feel about him."

"He'll come anyhow. He assured me he meant to come frequently, and he'll come, believe me, no matter how I may feel about it! And I wouldn't dare tell him I'd prefer his room to his company."

"I would—if I felt that way—but I don't. I can't understand why you dislike him so much. Personally, I'd be very sorry not to see more of him, but not here—if he gets on your nerves. But mother, I really think that you've allowed yourself to become a little hysterical—"

"Hysterical? I've never been hysterical."

"But listen, you dear, anxious mother! Let me psychologize the situation. This is how it looks to me! You allowed yourself to dream a little dream, connecting your daughter and Mr. Jarou's millions — and when you saw his white hair, and observed his masterful manners, and thought of your little girl married to him—why then the nice little dream became a nightmare. Isn't that so?"

"Perhaps," replied the mother, evasively; then added passionately, "I wish he had not come to Royalton."

"You've been too anxious about me, mother. But don't worry any more. Mr. Jarou is thinking of me as a little girl—the daughter of his old friend—I'm sure of that, Mumsey. Besides, dear, I just know that he once had hopes of winning you."

"Beatrice! How do you know it? What nonsense! Why do you say a thing like that?"

"Because I've read that unrequited love sometimes turns to hate—and when he came into this room he looked at you as if he almost hated you. Yet he hadn't seen you for years and years. Now there must be some reason for that, and what other reason could there be?"

"You are too absurd. I'll not listen to such nonsense. I am going to my room."

It was evident to Beatrice that Mrs. Willis sought safety in flight, yet she couldn't understand why. "There's something between those two," she decided, "something important, that I ought to know about. Mother is unhappy. I ought to help and comfort her, but how can I when I don't understand the situation. I've simply got to keep my eyes open—watch quietly for a clue."

Mrs. Willis was more anxious than she had ever been in her life. And she was frightened. She felt that she was being enclosed by invisible wires, and that she did not know how to free herself. She was confident that she had placed herself in the power of an enemy whose system of warfare was beyond her comprehension. Hicks Jarou had not once mentioned the money he had loaned her, nor had he allowed her to do so. She felt, almost, as if he did not consider it a loan, but a purchase price; and that he might make her suffer a long time before he would let her know exactly what he thought he had purchased. Yet always when she became panic stricken, as she was now, she had to admit that she really had no good reason for it. Hicks Jarou had said nothing of which she could complain. It was the way he sometimes looked at her that filled her very soul with fear. And Beatrice had noticed. She said he looked as if he hated her. How many of their friends had also seen that? What was her little world saying about her? Did anyone know that her home had been mortgaged, and that the mortgage had been paid off? Were her friends wondering where she had obtained the money? How could she ever raise enough to repay Hicks Jarou? Oh, to be free from him!

Just to be free to tell him never again to cross her threshold! But how could that be managed? It looked hopeless. Perhaps Franklin Potter — she had never liked Potter — she knew that Beatrice did not want to marry him—but he wanted to marry Beatrice. Might he not prove to be the friend in need? Why should she not sound him out? If she discovered that he was in a position to raise a large sum of money on short notice, why should she not confide in him—give him a glimpse of her dilemma—perhaps throw herself on his mercy? If necessary, she was quite sure her brave daughter would pay the price.

Late that evening Franklin Potter might have been seen cautiously threading his way along unfrequented streets leading in the direction of the home of Hicks Jarou. He was not seen, however, as he chose his time well, when pedestrians would not be likely to use the streets he traversed. Besides it was past midnight and heavy clouds obscured the sky and all its sources of celestial illumination.

When he reached the house, he hesitated for an instant to make sure no casual passerby was there to observe. When satisfied on this point, he gave a peculiar rap upon the lower pane of the window built so high in the wall that he had to stand on tip-toe to reach it. The street door was immediately opened and he was admitted.

"Are you leaving the city so soon?" he asked in dismay as he noted that Three Eyes was locking a well filled valise.

"For a few weeks, yes," replied Hicks Jarou.

"But our case against Sir Wilfred Yonge! Do you wish it dropped?"

"Decidedly not. Don't let that worry you. Runjeet Singh has the necessary data." Then turning to Three Eyes, "prepare yourself, Runjeet."

Three Eyes made himself comfortable in an easy chair, and seemed to drift into a light sleep.

"This is the way the matter stands," said Hicks Jarou to Potter. "Wilfred Yonge is coming to Royalton very soon,

and the silly title worshippers will go crazy over him, while he will go crazy over Beatrice Willis. We don't want them to meet. That is why he must be exposed."

Franklin was too astonished for words. Why should Hicks Jarou be interesting himself in Beatrice Willis? Why should he care whom the girl married? Franklin did not like that casual allusion to the girl whom he himself hoped to marry. If Hicks Jarou objected to Sir Wilfred Yonge as a husband for Beatrice, did that mean that he had some one else in prospect? What possible business of his could it be anyhow? Franklin was worried—but he tried not to show it. He felt that he'd rather not discuss Beatrice with Hicks Jarou just at present. Hicks was going away for a time; perhaps before his return—he and Beatrice might marry. If he found them married upon his return—well, what could he do about it in that event?

Hicks Jarou was sitting before Three Eyes, with his eyes fixed on the third eye of that individual, which had been uncovered for that purpose. Franklin shuddered, although he had seen it on several occasions. The other two eyes slept and were closed, but this eye seemed never to sleep, and when seen alone was fearfully bright and uncanny in appearance.

"Are you ready?" asked Hicks Jarou, quietly.

"Quite ready," breathed Three Eyes.

"Proceed."

"There was once a Knight," said Three Eyes, "who had forfeited his shield and it was taken from him. He had another shield made but it never received recognition either from William Dugdale Norroy or any other authority."

Franklin was taking notes in shorthand. Three Eyes paused. "Go on," commanded Hicks Jarou; "you can't awaken yet. Go on—'any other authority'—go on from there."

"On the third shelf from the right, as you enter the royal library in England, you will find a book which holds proof of this fact. Also, procure book Number twenty-eight from our own library and turn to page three-ninety-seven. This ancestor

of Sir Wilfred Yonge was summoned before the King-of-Arms to show by what right he bore arms, and as he could not show that he was entitled to that honor he was then and there degraded, and it was so proclaimed by the court crier in the square. No Yonge has had the right to claim a place among the nobility since that day."

"All right," said Hicks Jarou; "we understand. Wake up." Then to Franklin: "That will be all you need. Don't let Yonge get a footing in Royalton. Spring this if possible before he has an opportunity to meet Miss Willis."

Since Wilfred Yonge has no part to play in this story except to make clear a certain question concerning Franklin that had been puzzling Miss Willis, it need only be said that he was not received by Royalton's smart set, and that Franklin Potter thereby won another laurel as a genealogist.

A nice little item appeared on the social page of The Royalton Star to the effect that, much to his regret, Hicks Jarou had been called away on an important matter, before his palatial residence was quite in order, and that therefore the very elaborate house-warming he had meant to give must be postponed. And while Royalton discussed the house-warming, about which most of them had not heard, and wondered who would be invited—who ignored—and who would attend, the subject suddenly lost its importance in a new announcement from Wash, the negro grave digger.

He declared that he had seen Percy Southdown, alive and well, walking along the river bank with the tall, thin, dark man who had stood beside his grave, on that awful never-to-be-forgotten night. Severe, prolonged and canny cross questioning failed to change his statement in any particular. He had seen Percy Southdown—alive and well—walking along the river bank with the man whom he believed to be the devil.

Notwithstanding the apparent proof of his first amazing statement that Percy's grave had been rifled, this last declaration was too absurd for credence. Everyone knew that Percy had

shot himself through the heart—or had been shot by someone else—that he had died, that he had lain in state for two days before being buried—that he had been buried six feet deep, and that he had stayed buried at least twelve hours—which was quite long enough to have finished him even though he had been buried alive. Of course he was dead. In all probability there were medical students who could have told exactly what had become of his body. Such things had been done before—and while it was distressing in a way—and, after all, it was just as well it should happen to a corpse without relatives. Of course Percy was dead. The subject was too silly to talk about. Something ought to be done about Wash. It looked as if he were losing his mind. His story was made out of whole cloth—it couldn't be otherwise—yet—yet suppose it were true!

Franklin Potter listened to the gossip—but said nothing. He had become deathly pale when he heard the story, and had been joked about his evident perturbation.

“How about Percy's ten thousand? Has the Sunshine Society obtained it yet? If not, hadn't you better take back your gift, and hold it until Percy can claim it?”

Those were only a few of the questions thrown at Franklin and he was forced to smile—forced to say that when Percy came to him and asked for his money he could have it—forced to declare that the negro's story couldn't possibly be true—and yet forced to keep to himself the awful fear that it might be true. For in his heart he believed that anything of that sort was possible in the neighborhood of Hicks Jarou—the man who, when a mere boy, had made hearts beat in glass bottles.

If that negro's story were true—what might Percy do to him? If that were true—well, even so, he did not believe he would be allowed to escape from Royalton, no matter how hard he might try to get away. Until Hicks Jarou was ready to release him, he would be compelled to remain in Royalton, and meet Percy Southdown—and the Lord only knew what would happen then. If only he could summon the courage to kill himself.

But could he succeed even though he tried? Wouldn't Hicks Jarou bring him back to life, and force him to do his bidding?

What would they, who were joking him about his possible loss of an inheritance he did not want, have said could they have guessed at the awful fear that drained the color from his face! They didn't know Hicks Jarou as he did.

CHAPTER V.

Again Franklin Potter might have been seen, late at night, making a furtive visit to the home of Hicks Jarou. It was a stormy night and he did not want to go; but he felt that he could not stay away. He could not quite believe the negro's story about Percy Southdown—he hoped most fervently that it was not true—but he realized that it might be. And if it were, he must know it. If Percy were alive he must see him—alone—before any of their old friends had an opportunity to interview him. He was glad that Hicks Jarou would not be at home. Runjeet Singh could tell him all he cared to know. He gave his significant tap on the window in an angle of the house, after making sure that a lamp burned within, which meant that Runjeet Singh was awake and at work. Did the man never sleep? Why was he so long in answering the signal that had been agreed upon? Franklin shivered as he sought shelter a little closer to the beautiful honey locust tree around which the house has been built when the new addition had been decided upon. Hicks Jarou would never have a tree cut if it could possibly be avoided.

After what seemed an age, a tall form came silently around the corner of the building, instead of opening the door near the window as he had always done before.

“What is it?” he asked, inhospitably.

“I want to get in out of this damned storm!” replied Franklin testily. “Why didn’t you open that door?”

“You can’t go in tonight.”

“Why not, I’d like to know!”

“Jarou’s orders. No one is to be admitted while he is away.”

“But we can’t talk here in the rain, I want a word with you—”

“Go ahead. I’m listening.”

"Some one else may be listening—"

"No one can hear if you speak softly. What is it?"

"Runjeet, tell me! What did you do with the body?"

"What body?"

"Percy Southdown's. I know well enough that you took it from the grave."

"Yes. I brought it here." Runjeet's reply was as matter-of-fact as if he were admitting an everyday occurrence that couldn't possibly be classed as unusual by anyone.

"Why?" whispered Franklin, almost fearfully. "And why did you do the job so carelessly?"

"Carelessly?"

"Was it necessary to leave the coffin there—and the grave open?"

"It wasn't a bad plan," replied Three Eyes with a grin. "It was desired that the occurrence should create talk. Everything is moving along very nicely."

"He was really shot through the heart, wasn't he?"

"Yes."

"Well then, wasn't he dead?"

"Oh yes, quite dead; but mortification had not set in. I attended to that—made it impossible—while he was at the undertaker's. It was an easy matter. No one saw what I did."

"But why did you do that? I don't understand. I must know."

"Because I meant to do exactly what I did do. We've been waiting a long time for something of the sort to happen to someone of sufficient importance to count. We want the affair to create a great deal of talk."

"Is Hicks Carew behind all this?"

"Surely; no one else would have sufficient brains."

"Then he has been making an experiment?"

"A very wonderful experiment. The world can no longer doubt that he is the greatest living scientist. No other man has succeeded in making a dead heart live again."

"Then Percy is—is—" ; Franklin almost choked on the question. Three Eyes watched him curiously in the dim light afforded by the glow of the lamp shining through the window curtain.

"The experiment was a success," he said, purposely holding back the reply that he knew Franklin sought.

"Does that mean that the man is—that he still lives?"

"He still lives."

"Does he remember what happened before—before he shot himself?"

"Yes, and he thinks he recalls much that happened while he lay dead ; but he is rather reticent as to that."

"Would he know me—all his friends?"

"Oh, yes ; but he no longer thinks of them as friends. He has gone through a curious change—his outlook on life is very different—"

"Do you think he would see me?"

"He might ; I don't know. I'm sure he wouldn't seek you."

"May I see him?"

"When?"

"Now."

"It is rather late—but he may not have retired. He might admit you, if he's still up. He keeps late hours as a rule."

"Where can I find him?"

"Over there, in that little cottage. It was built especially for him. A light is burning."

"Will you go over with me?"

"No thank you. Goodnight. It is time for me to be getting in out of the rain."

Three Eyes disappeared as silently and swiftly as he had appeared, and Franklin was left alone. The interview had left him feeling most uncomfortable. He believed he had detected a sinister undertone in the carefully worded sentences which had seemed to tell a great deal—which really were illuminating—and yet which withheld all that Franklin most wished to know.

He knew that Three Eyes was not in doubt as to his errand, and that he was deliberately avoiding any reference to that which he so anxiously sought. He would have to see Percy Southdown alone—have to find out for himself what danger the future held for him. And the sooner he faced the situation the better. He could stand the suspense no longer. He tapped lightly, almost hoping that his summons would not be heard, but the door was opened almost immediately, and Percy Southdown—could it be Percy Southdown—stood before him.

“Come in,” he said gravely; “I’ve been expecting you.”

“Expecting me?” stammered Franklin.

“For several days. I knew you’d have to come as soon as you heard I was living.”

“I — I — it was hard to believe.”

“You thought you did the job too well for that, didn’t you?” A fleeting smile flickered over the grave face, which, to Franklin’s astonishment seemed to hold no look of anger.

“Southdown, I was—”

“Don’t call me Southdown,” interrupted the man. “I no longer sail under false colors. My name is Nathan Hawkins. I’m called Nat by my friends.”

“I — I just wanted to tell you—that—that I had not meant to kill you—”

“You aimed rather well,” replied Nat dryly.

“I really had not meant to shoot you.”

“Yet you brought your gun along when you came to call that night.”

“I know I did. I meant to threaten you—but when you taunted me—when you said I was not fit to marry Beatrice Willis—”

“But you know very well that you are not.”

“I do not admit that. Why am I not fit, I’d like to know.”

“A slave?”

"Don't you call me that again. Don't you dare!" Franklin's temper flared again as it had that night, when he had shot the man who tantalized him.

"Got your gun with you?" asked Nat quietly.

"I have not. I shall never carry it again. God, man, can't you understand how hard it is to listen to such an accusation?"

"Yes, it is hard—because it is true. That is why I pity you more than I blame you. That is why I left you that money—because I pity any white man who has allowed himself to become a slave. And that is your business, of course—but—hands off so far as Beatrice Willis is concerned. She is too fine to be married to a man like you."

"Did you think—masquerading as Lord Percy Southdown—that you were more worthy?"

"I should not have married her. I had already carried my little joke on Society's pets about as far as I meant to carry it. Your wonderful expose only hastened the end by a few days."

"But you loved her?"

"I did — and do. She is a fine girl—but her mother will compel her to marry for money—more, a hundred times more money than I ever expect to have."

"That reminds me. The money you left me—"

"Ten thousand dollars—yes."

"I gave it to the Sunshine Society—but of course it has not been turned over—we can probably get it back—"

"Let them keep it; I don't want it."

"Don't want it —but — but you seem — to need it—" and he glanced from the man in his workman's suit to the sparsely furnished room in which they stood. They stood while talking, because his host had not asked him to be seated.

"I do not want it," repeated Nat. "My past is behind me. I am not proud of it. The money I brought to Royalton was the result of a lucky gamble. I was educated as a civil engineer—and I am now working at my trade. I earn what I get—I

refuse to take a penny more than I earn. I am a free man. I can earn all I need. We'll not mention the ten thousand again."

"Your wardrobe and books—personal belongings?"

"You may send those to me whenever you find it convenient—that is, if you've kept them. If not, never mind. I can get more according to my needs."

"May I ask your plans?"

"I shall work for Hicks Jarou as long as he needs me. He is the greatest scientist I have ever known. I'm proud to be able to fashion some of the appliances he requires."

"I meant—your plans with respect to your—eh—your old friends—"

"I have no old friends," replied Nat quietly and without the least trace of bitterness. "I have not deserved friends. But I shall not avoid old acquaintances. I can't. I wish it to be known that I was dead and buried,—shot through the heart—and that I live again. I wish it to be known that I live because Hicks Jarou has discovered how to heal a heart that did not fail through disease. It will mean much to humanity—after awhile; but the world is going to be slow to accept this astounding fact."

There was regret in his voice as he finished the sentence, and he seemed to have forgotten that he was not alone. He turned away as if to resume the task which engaged his attention when Franklin disturbed him, and stood beside his work bench scanning a drawing with frowning brows over brooding eyes. Franklin was ill at ease. He felt dismissed, but he was not yet ready to go,—he had not learned that for which he had come.

"You are going to tell—what happened?" he faltered. "Will you wait until I leave town before you do that?"

Nat looked at him almost as if he had not seen him before.

"Oh that!" he replied; "of course you wish to know that. I shall say that I was shot through the heart, but I need not tell who shot me. I have nothing to gain by jumping on you."

"If you could only believe that I did not mean—that it was like temporary insanity—if you could believe that and forgive—"

"I don't know that I have anything to forgive," was the surprising reply. "You will suffer more from that episode than I shall. Indeed, it brought me a very wonderful experience—an experience I could not have had otherwise—one that will affect my whole life. No, I have nothing to forgive—and I shall do nothing to make you suffer. You have enough coming to you without any additions from me. I will now bid you goodnight—if you will kindly go and leave me to my work."

Nat returned to his work and Franklin let himself out, feeling that in every way he had gotten the worst of the strange encounter, and yet realizing that he should be giving thanks for having been let off so easily. He had shot a man, and was not to suffer for it. He had denounced a man no guiltier than himself, and was not to be called to account by this man he had abused. His position in Society was not to be taken away, and his rival had deliberately stepped down into the ranks of the laboring class, no longer to be met socially unless deliberately sought, and workmen were not sought, especially by those with whom he associated. He had nothing left to worry about so far as the Percy Southdown episode was concerned.

Franklin believed that Nathan Hawkins would be true to his promise, and yet why should he believe that? He had never believed in Percy Southdown. What was the nature of the change that had come over the man? He not only believed that Nathan would be true to his promise, but he also confessed to himself that there was a quality of greatness about the man that he could never emulate. He felt that the difference between them was of such a nature that he would never feel comfortable in Nathan Hawkins' presence; he would always feel ashamed of himself—always hate his inferiority—always wish he had the strength of character to go back, so far as that was possible, and begin where he left off when he sold his personal freedom for a salary that was greater than any man could honestly earn.

The following Sunday, they who had known Percy Southdown intimately were astonished beyond measure to see him march down the aisle of the fashionable church he had attended before his death, and take his place in the pew he had occupied ever since coming to Royalton. His subscription had not yet expired, and although no one ever expected to see him again, it chanced that the pew had not been taken by anyone else.

As he came down the aisle an audible gasp swept over the congregation. Even the pastor gazed with wide eyes that could not believe in the reality of what they were seeing. Some of the congregation had heard the story told by Wash, the negro, but none had really believed it. Most of those present had not even heard it. They knew that he had been shot, or had shot himself, that he had died instantly—according to the doctors—and that in due time he had been buried. Many of them had attended his funeral, which had been quite a note-worthy spectacle. They were few who had not heard of the grave robbery, and it was generally accepted as a fact that his body had been used by medical students in the interests of humanity. His had been a well known figure, as that of an aristocrat is sure to be in a republican country like ours, and he had never entered that church without attracting much attention; but no one had expected or desired to see him there again. Yet here he was, calmly taking his old seat, and dressed quite as carefully and exquisitely as he had been before his expose—in those days when he had been acclaimed Society's most favored. He wore the same suit in which he had appeared on that last Sunday, and he was no less assured in his bearing than he had been then. In fact, he did not seem to realize what a sensation he was creating. His self possession was remarkable. Even though he had not died and been buried, how could he retain that supreme air of self-respect which had been his most notable characteristic before that humiliating expose had appeared in the Royalton Star! It was incredible. Such a thing could not happen. He had no right to be there—just as if

nothing had happened. It was a crime against humanity to force an acceptance as a fact of something that could not possibly have occurred. Words cannot describe the poignancy of the thoughts that swirled through the minds of that fashionable congregation and its fashionable pastor. "Are the others seeing it, too?" was the burden of their mental agonizing. "Am I delirious? Is he really there?" It will be readily understood that the services that day may as well have been omitted. No one heard a word. It is doubtful if the pastor, himself, knew what he was saying. But Nathan Hawkins knew that the poor pastor had quite unwittingly babbled something about a doubting Thomas who could not accept the evidence of his own eyes, but sought the added proof to be obtained from groping impious fingers,—and then had hastily caught himself up and buried himself in the safety of his written announcements.

Never before had a congregation so dreaded to hear the benediction, for they knew that it heralded the approach of a most embarrassing moment. What should be their attitude to this man whom they had known as Percy Southdown? Should they ignore him? That is what he deserved—he himself would have to admit that—but ought they to do so in church—and more especially since this had been Communion Sunday? And could they do it after all the man had been through? Surely he had suffered enough. Besides, did they really want to do it? Wouldn't it be better to recognize his presence in a casually pleasant way—perhaps not so much as an equal—more as a repentant sinner—and thus win for themselves the coveted opportunity to hear all about his horrible experience? Did he realize at the time that he was being buried alive? What did he think about while lying under six feet of sod? Did he have any premonition of his final delivery? Of course he would not expect ever again to be received as a social equal—but there would surely be opportunities for discreet questioning.

And what was Beatrice Willis thinking? What had the man's unexpected appearance meant to her? In talking about

it afterward, they all agreed that she had turned deathly white, but no one could guess what she was thinking, or how she would meet the man she had promised to marry. She left the church at the conclusion of the sermon, quite as she had done on many occasions, and she did not appear in any way embarrassed.

As soon as the service was concluded, Nathan Hawkins made his way down the aisle of the church—not hastily as if he were running away, but quickly enough to get well ahead of the old friends who had been seated near him. He made it clearly evident that he asked nothing whatsoever of anyone on earth. There was even something in his manner that caused his old friends to wonder if he cared to be recognized by them. He did not walk like one who had cause for shame. He avoided no one's eyes. Instead he glanced at those whom he passed as casually as any stranger might have done, with nothing either of recognition, or embarrassment, or curiosity, in his clear gaze. His manner suggested the most self-respecting, the most independent, of the best type of workman, whose life is too full of worth-while things to waste any of it on the idle rich, either in envy or in criticism.

Alfred Burton hastily followed him, reaching his side as he left the church.

"Hello, Southdown," he said, cheerfully, placing a hand familiarly on Nathan's shoulder, "whoever expected to see you here again!"

"Not Southdown, if you please," replied Nathan quietly. "Lord Percy Southdown is as dead as you thought him—good business too! My name is Nathan Hawkins."

There were not a few who overheard that much, and who really wished they might accompany the two men down the street. It was simply frightfully interesting—if they who were left behind really meant what they said. They felt quite indebted to Alfred for having relieved them of a horribly embarrassing situation. They really could not decide what to do, don't you know? But Alfred always acted on impulse. He did

exactly as he pleased, and didn't care a copper what anyone said about him. The fact was that his position was so secure that there was really no one who would have cared to criticize him, no matter how erratic they might consider him.

"I'd like to walk with you, if you don't mind," said Alfred with his most ingratiating air. "I'd like to know just what sort of joke you've managed to put over."

"Do you mean—before or since my death?"

"Your death," scoffed Alfred ; "don't pound your jokes in, old chap. I couldn't guess the riddle in a hundred years. How did you do it?"

"So far as I am concerned, it was all exactly as it appeared. I was shot through the heart—was buried—was rescued by a servant of Hicks Jarou, and my heart was mended. If you could see the big scar where I was opened it might be less difficult for you to believe what I say. My body was opened, and my heart mended, by the most wonderful scientist this world has ever known."

Alfred put both hands on Nathan's shoulders and stood there facing him. "See here, man," he said, "do you expect me to believe all that?"

"No; but I wish you might, because it is the absolute truth. I wish it might be accepted. It will be some day of course; but the world is cruel to its greatest scientists. It must crucify them before it makes use of their gifts. I do so desire to show my gratitude to Hicks Jarou by testifying as to his service in my behalf. He has given me the opportunity to make amends. While much of my life was foolishly wasted, and can never be re-lived, yet I may do something worth while with the remainder if I work faithfully with that end in view."

"I suppose, when a fellow comes as close to death as you did, it does make him serious."

"That gunshot wound, and—and the expose—and the wonderful experience I passed through—all had a bearing on my present outlook—but I'd begun to think rather earnestly be-

fore any of that happened. You see, a man can't fall in love with a nice girl without wondering if he is worthy. I knew damned well that I was not. But I didn't know just what to do about it. Of course I realize that, whatever happened, the girl I loved was not for me."

"Would you care to take me into your confidence?"

"Partially, yes; but there is nothing I shall tell you that may not be repeated. In fact, I'm quite sure it would be anyhow. You'll find it too interesting to keep to yourself—and, after all, the people who received me—whom I fooled—have a right to know about me."

"You did make monkeys of us—there's no denying that. And I'm not sure that we didn't deserve it."

"My people lived in England," said Nathan. "My father was one of the best engineers on the island—and I learned all he could teach me. I'm working at my trade, now—working for Hicks Jarou. But a few years ago I decided that I did not care to labor all my life, and so I went away from my home and after a time found a position as valet for old Lord Southdown."

"Valet!" exclaimed Alfred. "So that is where you learned to dress—"

"That is where I learned how to act like an aristocrat. And that is where I heard of Percy—the son who is never mentioned by any member of the family. I think they do not know where he is, but that doesn't matter. While acting as valet, I occasionally got tips—overheard the aristocratic gamblers who frequented the house—and took advantage of what I learned. When I had amassed as much money as I thought I'd need to—to do what I did—I came over here. You know the rest."

"And now?" asked Alfred softly.

"Now I am going to work. Perhaps I may make good on an invention I have in mind. And while I go on with that, and with the task Hicks Jarou has set for me, I shall try to make someone understand that what I have told you about the gunshot

wound through my heart is absolutely true. I wish Mr. Jarou might get the honor as a scientist to which he is entitled—and that I might help a little to that end.”

“But of course he’ll get recognition if he has earned it!”

“Sometime, yes; but it may come a long time after he dies. Perhaps you’ve never thought what the world does to the men who dare discover new truths.”

“Why, no; I don’t know that I have. Tell me.”

“If I were to try to tell you all it would make a longer list than we have time for. And I couldn’t recall the names of all the scientists who have been crucified at a moment’s notice, granting that I know them all, which I do not.”

“I didn’t know you were interested along this line. When did you find time for such reading at it must call for?”

“I didn’t find time when I was wasting it with you idle rich; but I used to read a great deal before that—and I do now. I presume you never heard of Dr. Auenbrugger of Vienna, but he discovered and tried to teach the procedure of percussion, was derided, and for forty-two years his methods failed to obtain recognition.”

“All Greek to me,” said Alfred, “but I’m interested.”

“Dr. Semmelweis, the great Hungarian scientist, lost his position in the University of Vienna because he discovered the cause of puerperal sepsis; the Medical Society of Bologna shouted down Dr. Galvagni when he sought to explain his discovery of the galvanic current, through his memorable experiment with the electrified leg of a frog. For years a favorite joke among learned doctors was to croak when Dr. Galvagni appeared.”

“I did read somewhere,” said Alfred, “of the scorn that was heaped on Harvey because of his discovery of the circulation of the blood.”

“Yes,” replied Nathan, “and English Medical Schools are still trying to find reasonable excuses for their treatment of Sir Joseph Lister to whom we are indebted for listerine and for

the first lessons in antiseptic dressing of wounds. And they'd like to forget their persecution of Dr. Gall—Oh, when I get to thinking of the Medical societies I lose all patience. Why continue the subject? I have little hope that Hicks Jarou will live long enough to gain recognition through his discoveries concerning the heart."

Nathan ceased speaking and turned toward his companion as if expecting him to go his way. "I stop here," he said finally, indicating a cottage well back from the road. "That is where I am staying while I work for Jarou."

"May I come to see you sometime?" asked Alfred. "I'd like to, very much."

"I'm so busy most of the time," replied Nathan—"and I can't find sufficient time to study as it is."

"Oh, come now! You are trying to put me off. You don't work Sundays. Why can't I walk home with you again next Sunday?"

"Why, I suppose you can — if you really wish it so much," was Nathan's ungracious reply. "You see," he added by way of explanation, "I don't feel at all proud of that portion of my life with which you are acquainted. I'd like to forget it, since recalling it cannot help me in any way. I have put it behind me as definitely as I could, and I'm giving all the best of me to the future."

"But you can't ignore all your old friends."

"I have no real friends in Royalton—and I do not intend to feed the curiosity of anyone I knew in the past."

"Well, old top, just hear me! You may not care for my society, but I care for yours. I find you mighty interesting, and I'm going to pester you at least once every week. Don't kick against the pricks. You simply can't help yourself. And here's my prediction: You are going to find me better company than you think."

With that the two men separated, neither quite realizing how strong was to become the friendship between them.

CHAPTER VI.

On a certain day, readers of The Royalton Star were unusually interested in an item which appeared on the society page. It was to the effect that Hicks Jarou had just returned from an airplane trip to the island of Tyrsanghee—a vast tract of land sleeping in the South Seas.

“For years we have heard wonderful stories of this island,” they read, “and, according to Mr. Jarou’s report, these stories have not exaggerated the amount of wealth and beauty of this garden spot of the world. But we are happy to announce that we may now become better acquainted with it through its ruler, King Omar-Kouli, who has returned with Mr. Jarou, and will remain as his guest for several weeks. One interesting item concerning His Majesty’s visit, is that he is in search of a wife, and frankly states his purpose. His Majesty believes the interests of his people will be best served by bringing a lady from a foreign land to queen it over them, and to teach them the advantages and delights of our present day civilization. When speaking of Royalton he declared that a community which attracts a man of scientific learning, like Hicks Jarou, must surely be above the average in the quality of its population, and that is why he determined to pay us a visit. The Royalton Star takes pleasure in assuring him that his position is well taken, for we are the most modern of the moderns, and we are confident that he will have chosen wisely should he decide that it is to one of our fair daughters to whom he will offer himself, his throne, his people, his lands and his wealth.”

“Bunk!” exclaimed Alfred Burton, who had read the item aloud at one of Mrs. Willis’ afternoon teas. “His Majesty! Huh! Somebody’d better tell him that Royalton is fed up on nobleman stuff!”

"But Hicks Jarou evidently stands for this man," said Mrs. Somers. "I don't believe he'd take the trouble to deceive us."

"Whoever heard of Tyrsanghee?" demanded Beatrice.

"I've heard of the place," replied Franklin Potter, "but I must confess that I don't know much about it."

"King Omar-Kouli," repeated Mrs. Somers quite sentimentally. "It has a fascinating sound."

"Oh, he'll be carrying you around in his pocket in a week or so," jibed Burton.

"If he's rich, young and handsome, I shall not object to the pocket," Mrs. Somers replied, "but until I've seen the king, I'll continue to concentrate on Hicks Jarou."

"What have you heard of Tyrsanghee?" demanded Beatrice to Franklin Potter.

"Principally that it is rich in ore of various kinds, and secondly that Hicks Jarou has some valuable concessions that take him there occasionally."

"Of course you'll give us King Omar-Kouli's genealogical record," put in Mrs. Somers vivaciously. "We'll all be willing to pay well for a copy—take my word for that."

"Will you accept my verdict, as well?"

"Of course. Your exposure of the fellow who called himself Sir Wilfred Yonge makes it impossible to do anything else."

"Well, I'm from Missouri!" announced Alfred Burton. "I've got to be shown. I have not ceased smarting in the place where my self-esteem is located. His Majesty will get a cool reception from your humble servant."

"I presume he'll decline to recognize you," replied Mrs. Somers. "I don't believe he'd take the trouble to deceive us." friendship for Nathan Hawkins—alias Lord Percy Southdown."

"That will be up to him," said Alfred cheerfully. "I never did care for Southdown, as you all know—but Nat Hawkins is worth knowing."

"You said you'd bring him to call on me," accused Mrs. Somers.

"I tried to."

"Mean to say he refused to come?"

"Absolutely. Said he had no time to waste."

"I don't believe it."

"As you please. You can ask him yourself, you know."

"You two never meet without quarreling," interrupted Mrs. Willis. "Won't someone drag Alfred Burton away from Mrs. Somers?"

"Why not drag her away from me," asked Albert plaintively. "She's always picking on me."

"The lady you love will soon be a bride," sang Mrs. Somers gaily, as she posed before Alfred, "with a diadem on her brow. Oh, why did she flatter your boyish pride; she's going to leave you now." She broke off abruptly and made a low obeisance. "She's going to leave you now, Alfie, in favor of a King from Tyrsangee."

"Black, shining, well-oiled, illiterate, a ring in his nose, kinky hair—I can just see that King; can't you, Potter?" asked Alfred.

"Let us hope the description is not correct," smiled Potter.

"Why?" asked Beatrice.

"Wouldn't a really interesting king help out the social season just opening?"

"I'm agreeing with Alfred as to the probable personal appearance of this king — black — well-oiled — illiterate — bah! I don't want to meet him."

"Candidly," replied Potter, seriously; "I don't believe he is anything like that."

"Do you know that he isn't?"

"No; but it would not be like Hicks Jarou to bring such a man here, as his guest, and on such a mission as he mentions. The fact that Jarou invites him is proof to me that he thinks this king will be found attractive."

"There's something in what you say about Hicks Jarou," rejoined Alfred, "if Nathan Hawkins has sized him up correctly. He says Jarou is so fastidious that he won't have a house servant about him who is not interesting,—that there is not an employee on his place who is not a scholar with some particular line of study upon which he spends his idle moments."

"Have you met any of these servants?" asked Mrs. Somers.

"Met them about the yard or when they chanced to drop into Nathan's shack on some matter of business. They glance at me as if I were part of the furniture."

"How do they treat Nathan?" asked Beatrice.

"Oh, he seems to understand them. I judge that they trust him — and I'm quite sure he likes some of them very much."

"I'm going to call on Nathan," announced Mrs. Somers, "after he has had time to size up the king."

"Much good may it do you!" laughed Alfred Burton.

"Think he won't tell me anything?"

"I'm sure he won't."

"You just wait! A surprise is in store for you."

Soon the merry company had disbanded and Mrs. Willis went to her room to rest. She was thinking hopefully about the king who wanted a wife. She could hardly believe her emancipation from Hicks Jarou would lie in that direction — but one never could tell! Anyhow it would do no harm to find out what she could. If the king chanced to choose Beatrice — and Jarou were pleased, he might deed the home to Beatrice free from all encumbrance. Then she would be free. It all depended upon what the king was like. If black and oily—Oh, no! But some South Sea Islanders were very handsome. Mrs. Willis felt quite sure that she could persuade Franklin Potter to give her an outline of King Omar-Kouli's genealogical record, before anyone else had seen it. If he really were a good match, Beatrice would then have a good start—

Soon after reading her morning paper, the next day, Mrs. Willis called upon Franklin and told him she wished to know

the facts before inviting Hicks Jarou's guest to her next tea. One in her position must be very careful and more especially since she had so foolishly invited that dreadful Southdown. Skillfully she led Potter on to declare that, as she was practically the leader of the social set, and her afternoon teas furnished other hostesses a key to the social standing of all new arrivals, she was, of course, perfectly right in her desire to know all that could be learned about King Omar-Kouli.

Franklin Potter spoke with apparent frankness. Mrs. Willis believed she had led him on, but he had expected that lady to call and was prepared. He knew there would be others, too, many of them match-making mothers, and he was prepared to meet them all.

Here is how it happened that he was not taken by surprise; at about two o'clock of that morning when the newspapers told the story of King Omar-Kouli, Potter had been summoned to the home of Hicks Jarou, and in that gentleman's laboratory he had committed to memory such information concerning King Omar-Kouli as Jarou desired the world to know.

There was not the slightest reason for Potter to doubt any part of the information — not even the lengthy document that traced the King's ancestry back to one of the fortunate dwellers in Noah's ark. Why should he doubt? Runjeet Singh had never once given him genealogical data that could be proven false. Potter ought to have accepted it, without question — and he did; yet he could not forget that the servant's third eye had acted not quite naturally during that seance! It had flickered, and for a moment a really sinister gleam became visible. Franklin could not believe he was being told an untruth, he feared some fact had been withheld, that was all — just some fact withheld. He was prepared to stand back of such facts as had been given him, but if there were a fact that he should know — and it had been withheld — what about his future social position in Royalton?

Potter had closely studied King Omar-Kouli, in that interview in the laboratory. The man seemed to be more intelligent than he had supposed the king of a small island would be, and his manner was delightful, yet he confessed to himself that he did not like this king. There was something about his Majesty that was puzzling, nay, even antagonistic. To begin with, he did not look like a South Sea Islander. And he did not act quite normal, but in what way did he appear abnormal? Franklin couldn't say why he was not satisfied, but he knew he was not. There was something — but his mind refused to supply the clue he needed. Omar-Kouli was decidedly good to look at, almost too perfect in form and feature when in repose; but in conversation — yes, there was the trouble! Now he had his clue! When in conversation Potter recalled that the king's features worked stiffly, as if he couldn't quite control them. He had also noticed an odd peculiarity of speech, a slight accent in the pronunciation, and a deliberation that was not altogether due to the fact that he was speaking a foreign language. It was more suggestive of vocal organs out of repair and in need of oiling. A patient coming out from under an over-dose of cocaine sometimes talked like that. But the clue proved disappointing. It didn't really lead to any conclusion — and the man was a king! That covered all of his defects, as a matter of course, and so he had told Mrs. Willis and she had readily assented.

“No one expects a man — even a king — of any foreign country to be quite like us,” Mrs. Willis had replied with stately magnanimity, and the interview had closed with Franklin's promise to give her a peep at the king's genealogical record as soon as he had it completed, and with his assurance that he believed Omar-Kouli really was King of Tyrsanghee.

The more Potter cogitated over the behavior of the third eye of Three Eyes, the firmer became his determination to demand further information concerning King Omar-Kouli. He found Hicks Jarou in his laboratory, the windows of which

looked out upon the beautiful little lake that now covered the place where there was once a fine lawn.

"I've come for further information," he said, "before completing the genealogical record of your guest."

"You have been given all that is necessary," replied Hicks Jarou, who had his eyes fixed on a test tube in a glass on the table before him.

"I am not satisfied with what you gave me."

"Oh! You are not satisfied!" Hicks Jarou abandoned the test-tube and concentrated on Potter. "What more do you want?" he demanded. "Have you ever had reason to doubt any genealogical record given you by Runjeet Singh?"

"N-o-o-o, but this — this document extends back to Noah."

"Well?"

"It is the first case on record—"

"Every fact is usually supported by a first case. Can you find any flaw in this record?"

"No-o-o."

"If you can not, then no one can."

"I suppose that is true."

"You have met the king. Don't you like him?"

"Not as much as I had expected to," confessed Franklin, adding nervously, "I have always thought myself capable of very great devotion to a king." He could have kicked himself when he said that. For some reason he always appeared at his worst when with his employer.

"You are still capable of great devotion," replied Hicks Jarou, gravely, and there was a hint of menace in his tone. Franklin had a frantic desire to make good — say what he was expected to say — get back on to safer ground.

"He certainly seems more intelligent than I had expected a king would be," he hastily offered in his most propitiatory manner. He was now too nervous to realize how very damnable his faint praise might appear to this master whom he feared.

"He is very handsome," supplied Jarou, apparently taking no notice of Franklin's nervousness.

"Almost too perfect," bleated Franklin, "like a china doll."

"When in repose, yes, you may be right," admitted Jarou thoughtfully; "but when he talks—"

"When he talks," interrupted Franklin, desperately, "he gives the impression that he has not yet become used to his features."

"What do you mean by that!" demanded Jarou, menacingly.

"Why-e-e, I don't know," stammered Franklin, shivering as he realized the extent of the awful blunders he had been making.

"You must have some reason for what you said. Explain yourself." Hicks Jarou's voice convinced poor Franklin that none of his blunders were to be overlooked, or to go unpunished. He must go on — do his best—

"Why I — ahem — silly idea, of course; but it seemed to me that — eh — that the King's features worked — eh — rather stiffly, if you get what I mean — not uncommon, by any means—stiff features, and — and, ahem! it seemed to me that this peculiarity extends to his tongue — as if he hadn't learned just how to control it."

"He is not in a class by himself, in that respect," remarked Hicks Jarou dryly.

"But the rest of us hardly give the impression that our vocal organs need oiling," protested Franklin, with a grin that he hoped would make his speech seem like airy persiflage.

"Oh, well," said Jarou, easily, "the king is only human! He has his defects, like the rest of us; but, being a king, he will not be critized as you or I should be."

"There's one thing I'd like to say," interjected Franklin, who realized that he had not yet said what he had come to say—what his manhood demanded that he should say—"and that is, if you are trying to palm off a spurious king—" He stopped abruptly. Perhaps he'd better begin again. Palm off a spurious king—

sounded more like what he was thinking than what he meant to say.

"Well?" asked Hicks Jarou quite calmly, as Franklin stopped, surprised and frightened at his own daring. There was fearful menace in the black eyes fixed upon him in that unwavering stare. Potter felt it. He trembled. He wondered at his rashness in starting such a conversation. He wished he could get away—but he was there—he had to say something—he must try to defend himself—but how? By this time, he had lost control of the nerve that had sufficed to bring him there. He stammered—and then repeated, quite fiercely, that awful supposition which he had not expected to put into words when he came in.

"If you are trying to palm off a spurious king—" he spluttered, and once more failed to finish the sentence.

"Well? If I were trying—what then?" There was not a glint of amusement in the black eyes.

"I would refuse to be a part of such deception," chattered poor Franklin, in anything but warlike manner.

"Oh! you would refuse." Hicks Jarou was smiling, and there was an oily, purring quality in his voice. "Do you really think you would?"

"You think I couldn't help myself," spluttered Franklin, "but you—you'd find out!" he finished with ludicrous tonelessness. He was pale to the lips, and he trembled as if chilled to the marrow. He had realized at that moment, what had before been only a disquieting thought, that Nat Hawkins had been right. He really was Hicks Jarou's slave, and he now knew that he would always do exactly what his master told him to do, no matter how much he would hate doing it.

Hicks Jarou was laughing aloud, and his laugh had a decidedly pleasant ring. It was charming. "I wonder," he said, easily, "just why you should imagine that King Omar-Kouli is not exactly as Runjeet Singh has represented him to be?"

"I—don't—know," replied Franklin, slowly; "really, I don't believe I did think that." The black eyes were boring through his skull. His head felt as if it would soon begin to whirl.

"But some such thought must have been in your mind." The voice was suave, but the eyes stared unwinkingly. "Don't be afraid to tell me exactly what you were thinking. Come now, I insist."

"I think it did occur to me, quite suddenly, how easy it would be for you to use me in—eh—in the way I suggested."

"That is, I might plan, quite deliberately, to make you the famous genealogist you have become, in order to get your endorsement in support of a spurious king? Is that what you thought?"

"Ye-es," stuttered Franklin, "something like that."

"But why would I wish to do that? Let's get down to the basic thought of your astounding accusation."

"I can see that it was quite ridiculous—in fact, unpardonable."

"Do you think jealousy might have anything to do with it?" inquired Hicks Jarou, with almost tender solicitude.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, let's drop the subject," pleaded Franklin Potter. "I—I must be going, now, anyhow."

"No, let's understand each other," and Hicks Jarou was quite fraternal, now. "I want you to be convinced—absolutely convinced in your own mind that the king is exactly as represented in that genealogical outline."

"And then?" asked Franklin in the tone of one who already knows the answer.

"And then, I desire you to give the news to an awaiting public." There was camouflage of the highest order in the tone that now covered a threat and a command, that Franklin Potter knew was not to be ignored.

"Why," he said, hastily and abjectly, "I have known all along that King Omar-Kouli is exactly as he has been represented." The words seemed to come from his mouth without his own volition. He had not known he was going to say them. He

had never thought them, but once spoken he did not know how to unsay them, and yet he wanted to for his manhood demanded it.

“Good!” replied Hicks Jarou, with child-like simplicity. “I’m a fool!” was Potter’s next remark, uttered with great violence. “I don’t know what I’m saying. I can’t be myself at all. I’d better be dead—”

“I do not think so,” replied Hicks Jarou, pleasantly. “You sometimes act on impulse, and that is not a mark of wisdom—but you are not a fool. For instance, you know how your bread is buttered, and how good the butter is. You know, also, that I’m the best friend, financially speaking, that you’ve ever had. Now tell me how you happened to reach your extraordinary conclusion concerning King Omar-Kouli.”

“It was not a conclusion so much as a suspicion. Something about Runjeet Singh’s damned third eye aroused my suspicions, I think.”

“Runjeet would like to have the king deposed—Runjeet would like to head a revolution in Tyrsanghee—and become king himself. You know how such things go; but I’m with the present king, and I hold the balance of power.”

“I see.” Potter looked thoughtful, “I hope you’ll believe,” he added uneasily, “that I really did not endorse what my speech implied. I’ve really known all along that the king is what you say he is.” Once again that sentence had come unbidden. Franklin felt that somehow Jarou was forcing him to repeat that inane speech until it should be graven on his brain in letters of fire.

“I’m glad to hear you say so. I want him to have a good time, while he is here. I want him to meet the best people.”

“When is society to meet his Majesty?”

“I don’t know, exactly. He is a little under the weather, just now. The trip proved rather hard on him, but perhaps tomorrow—”

"Will you take him over to Mrs. Willis' to tea tomorrow afternoon?"

"She has sent him a most cordial invitation, but he thinks he won't feel well enough. Besides, is that the proper way to introduce him? Ought a king to make the advances? Wouldn't it look as if he were doing that if he went over there so soon? Shouldn't Royalton come to him?"

"I suppose so," replied Potter, slowly—"yes, I think you're right about that. You must give a reception."

"A reception! The very thing. Thank you for suggesting it. Of course you'll help me arrange it?"

"I'll be delighted. You needn't worry about the details at all. You know I'd like nothing better than to take charge. Let's make it more magnificent than anything yet given in Royalton." Franklin had seen a way to get back what his blunders had cost him. The black eyes no longer stared at him. They looked pleased and satisfied. Franklin felt that an intolerable pressure had been lifted from his brain.

"Go ahead. You needn't try to economize on my account. I'm good for the bills, and I have the greatest faith in your judgment." Franklin listened and was happy.

The surprising part of our democracy is that there is nothing that will cause us to bend the knee quite so humbly as the opportunity to associate with royalty. Hicks Jarou's house was soon thronged with gay guests who declared they could not wait for the reception, because they each wished to be first to welcome home their scientist! The scientist smiled sardonically, and never marred the cordiality of the welcome by any spoken doubt as to the welcome he would have received had he not brought a king along with him.

Sometimes King Omar-Kouli met the guests who came to call upon his host, but not frequently; usually he refused to leave the palatial suite of rooms that had been placed at his disposal. Sometimes he was affable, but more frequently he was surly. If he had not been a king, he would have been

called decidedly ill-bred. But—the king can do no wrong! Hicks Jarou's sardonic smile was frequently in evidence when he had occasion to note some servile acceptance of the king's behavior that really merited a good old-fashioned spanking. Not that the man ever did anything that could be called immoral or cruel or lawless, but he was constantly breaking laws of society and conventionality, and we all know how difficult it is to forgive such infractions. Why? Because women are responsible for social laws, and women are not forgiving as a rule. But they readily enough forgave King Omar-Kouli, and only spoke of him as peculiar and eccentric, then smiled indulgently and told one another that he was not like one of us—couldn't be expected to be, don't you know! But how refreshing! How perfectly interesting! What a treat it was to know a monarch whose manners were so like those of the proletariat!

Hicks Jarou listened and smiled. He seldom spoke of his guest, although given abundant opportunity and frequent invitation to do so, and no one could be sure just how he regarded him. For instance, when the king was unusually rude—did Hicks Jarou approve?

"They are seen everywhere together," remarked Beatrice once when talking it over with Mrs. Somers. "The king is staying with Mr. Jarou and of course they are friends. I can't believe Mr. Jarou would entertain a guest of whom he did not approve."

"They are certainly very similar."

"That may account for their friendship."

"Do you know, Beatrice, I don't believe it is a friendship. I don't believe Mr. Jarou knows anything about friendship. I don't believe he ever had a real friend, or ever desired one. He cares for nothing but his scientific studies, and if he is interested in any human being it is because he is hoping to find new material to dissect."

Beatrice laughed. "Of course you don't believe what you're saying," she replied lightly. "I find Mr. Jarou very affable, and one of the most interesting men I've ever met."

"Can you converse with him?"

"In a way. I can always listen when he talks, and I enjoy that. I think you are right about his not having friends, but it is not because he doesn't want friends. The fact is, his mind is so far above ordinary minds that there are few who could understand him. I believe he is often very lonely. I'd give half my life if I were wise enough to be his friend."

"I'd like to understand him," confessed Mrs. Somers, "but I don't want him for a friend. I'd like to understand him well enough to know how to administer a few digs that would hurt him to the marrow."

"You ferocious monster! What has the poor man done to you?"

"Nothing; but that is the way he makes me feel. Come in and I'll show you the gown I'm to wear to the dear devil's reception."

No one of any importance in Royalton failed to attend Hicks Jarou's reception given in the king's honor. Nearly the entire lower floor of the Jarou mansion was without partitions, forming a magnificent hall well suited to ceremonious gatherings. It was evident that money had been spent lavishly in decorating this hall for the occasion, but the first thing that struck the eye was a wonderfully beautiful throne built at one end of the room. It was here, standing beside the throne, that Jarou received his guests and presented them to the gorgeously attired gentleman seated on the throne, who received them with what seemed like studied indifference. King Omar-Kouli was in oriental costume of imposing splendor, and was as picturesque as the most romantic girl could possibly desire. It was stated by some of the guests who were considered authoritative in the matter of precious stones, that the jewelry worn by the king that night could not have cost less than a million dollars.

King Omar-Kouli looked bored. Hicks Jarou looked worried. It isn't exactly pleasant to plan an entertainment for a guest who doesn't appear to be entertained. Even Mrs. Somers was not as gay as usual, and Alfred Burton was so detached and observant in manner that Mrs. Somers called him Sherlock Holmes whenever she got close enough to him to speak to him. But suddenly the king's eyes sparkled. His whole demeanor changed. He was interested. Beatrice Willis had entered the hall. She held herself proudly as she advanced toward the throne, and she looked far more like a queen than Omar-Kouli looked like a king.

He did not wait for an introduction. "Girl," he said, not caring who might hear, "Girl, if I had met you fifty years ago, how different my life might have been."

"Fifty years," laughed Beatrice, "why, I wasn't here fifty years ago."

"I was," replied the king, and his tone was as convincing as it was melancholy.

"I can't believe that," replied Beatrice, gaily. "I am sure your Majesty is joking."

"Let it go at that," was the brusque rejoinder. "Age doesn't matter, anyhow. Come, Girl, let's get away from this rabble, where we can talk undisturbed."

"Will your Majesty dance?" politely inquired Franklin Potter. "The musicians have gone to the ballroom—"

"Dance!" the king sneered contemptuously; "I command slaves to do my dancing."

That sufficed to spoil Franklin's program so far as dancing was concerned. It also spoiled his evening, for the king led Beatrice away from the crowd, exactly as if he were leading her through a mob of curious peasants who had come to do homage, and he kept her to himself for the remainder of the evening. It was considered exceedingly rude by all the mothers of marriageable daughters, except Mrs. Willis. That lady was doing her best not to appear too well pleased with the situa-

tion. She was explaining that kings never could be called rude. They might sometimes appear so to people unaccustomed to the ways of kings, but it must always be understood that they made their own social laws. Then she joined Franklin Potter, hoping he would have something of interest to tell her about the king; something he had learned since their last meeting, but Franklin was not communicative. He was jealous. He was watching Beatrice, and it was his opinion that she was flirting outrageously, and everyone could see that the ill-tempered king was no longer surly.

Franklin left Mrs. Willis with a murmured apology that sounded as cheerful as a curse, and made his way around the hall to a point of vantage behind the couple, who were too interested in each other to notice what anyone else might be doing. Franklin's jealousy was so intense that it led him to play the part of eavesdropper—something he really abhorred.

"The heart!" he heard the king exclaim in astonishment. "Pardon me, but did you say anything about hearts?"

"I may have," replied Beatrice evasively. "Is the heart never considered among your people, in questions of matrimonial alliance?"

"Somewhere," said the king, "I have seen statistics which show when the heart ceased quite generally to be a factor in the business of mating."

"He has the soul of a Turk," thought Franklin, and he was furious. He longed for a good opportunity to spoil the King's perfect features. He wished Beatrice would call to him for help and let him do battle in her behalf—but that young lady seemed to be enjoying herself immensely.

"Are your parents here this evening?" was his next question.

"My father is dead. Mother is here. She will feel honored to know you."

"Of course I'll want to study her; but mothers are not as important as fathers to the student of eugenics."

"I don't know much about eugenics," murmured Beatrice.

"Never mind. I know enough for us both. I'm inclined to think your parents were good enough, on the whole, to produce a desirable line of females. I shouldn't care to have been their son."

"If you please," replied Beatrice, with dignity, "I do not care to hear any more of your comments concerning my parents."

"No?" quite unmoved; "well, that's all right. I have no further comments to make concerning them. So don't act as if you were angry with me."

"I don't understand you."

"You will, in time."

"I'm not sure that I care to."

"You can't help yourself. I shall see you every day."

"Without an invitation?"

"Invitations are of no consequence to me. Look at me. Study me carefully. Would you call my face expressionless?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Potter says it is."

"Oh, well, he sees you nearly every day, doesn't he?"

"Do you think it would be a hardship to see my face every day?" continued the king, ignoring her question.

"It might become monotonous—if you always looked the same."

"Your face is very expressive. I can see that you are amused. You'd like to get away, for a minute, where you could laugh as heartily as you liked."

"Oh!" exclaimed Beatrice in dismay, "don't think that! I have not meant to be rude."

"Nor have you been. It is not rude to be natural. Have you had any of your teeth filled?"

Beatrice gasped, but managed a faint "not yet."

"Good! I'm overjoyed to hear that. And your hair—is it all your own?" Beatrice nodded.

"Does it look pretty hanging down your back? Is it naturally wavy?"

"It is, but — perhaps your Majesty does not realize that such questions are not customary—"

"Hang custom. I believe that when a man is looking for a mate, he should go about it in a businesslike way. He should know what he is getting. Then he'll never want a divorce."

He said this with great earnestness. He was not intentionally rude. It was evident that he had no sense of humor. Beatrice was puzzled. She felt that she should show resentment, but his attitude was such that she was not in the least offended. Instead, she was intensely interested. She wondered what he would say next.

"It is evident," he said, "that you have good health. Your physique is perfect. You would make a wonderful mother."

Franklin Potter did not care to hear any more. He told himself that the time had come for definite action. Beatrice must be saved. He found Hicks Jarou resting in his laboratory, where he had gone to escape the crowd for a few moments.

"What do you want now?" asked Jarou, crossly. It was not an auspicious opening.

"I want to know definitely what the future holds for me. I want to marry. I must know what I have to offer the girl to whom I wish to propose."

"You have found the girl?"

"Yes. I want to marry Beatrice Willis."

"Have you told her so?"

"I have intimated it. I think I have reason to hope. I wish to settle the matter at once."

"Why hurry?"

"I want to save her from that damned king."

Hicks Jarou turned and looked steadily into Franklin's eyes, "My boy," he said, "I am hoping King Omar-Kouli will marry Beatrice Willis." With that he left the room and rejoined his guests.

Franklin Potter stared after the retreating figure of his master with eyes full of misery — a misery that weighted his body and mind with leaden heaviness, for he had no doubt as to Jarou's meaning. It meant a warning to him to keep away from the object of his love, to abandon her and calmly see another come to possess the one thing in life that meant anything to him, and he knew in his innermost consciousness he would not disobey the warning.

"I am his slave," he muttered miserably, "and only God knows how I fear him."

When Hicks Jarou left Potter so abruptly, it was not to emphasize displeasure with the young man, but to look for King Omar-Kouli and learn exactly the status of the king's love making. He made it his business to keep in as close touch with his Majesty as was possible without creating comment. He quickly ensconced himself in the very seat that Franklin Potter had so lately abandoned. The King and Beatrice were still studying each other. The wonderful black eyes of Hicks Jarou were alight with the flame that comes to the eyes of an ardent scientist who believes his best loved theory is about to be materialized. He was happy in the belief that he would soon be told that this perfect specimen of womanhood had promised to become the wife of his protege.

"But the human heart," insisted Beatrice, her eyes fixed earnestly on the King's rather too placid countenance—"you must know that the human heart cannot be cheated with impunity."

"I've been reading some of the trash produced by modern writers, where the heart is played up in matrimonial alliances, just as if it were built of brain-matter instead of muscle. It is to laugh."

"You honestly believe your own heart never registers a sensation?"

"Not when I'm well."

"I know I can suffer heart-ache when I'm perfectly well. No one could convince me to the contrary."

"It is an inherited fallacy," was the calm reply. "I think there was once a time when the heart did register sensations of that sort; but it lost the power to register as humanity ignored it. You understand, I am sure, how the human body adapts itself to prevailing conditions."

"Oh, yes; I have read of pre-historic man with the monkey's tail," replied Beatrice carelessly.

"Then you must know that pre-historic man could not have shed the tail with which his simian forefathers endowed him, all in one moment. There must have been a period when some had tails, and some did not. Later, there must have been a time when many had heart-rending tasks trying to conceal the stump of a tail from more fortunate brethren who only had the scar left to serve as reminder of a former low order of animal."

"That, of course, I understand."

"Yes. My sympathies have always been with the heroic representatives of our race who would suffer any torture rather than reveal the presence of that clinging evidence of simian origin; because, such fortitude makes swifter evolution possible."

"I see," Beatrice said, thoughtfully intent. "Forget the stump and focus the mind on the stumpsless, scarless ideal!"

"Exactly."

"I wonder if you know what you are talking about?" asked Beatrice demurely.

"I do not. How can I, when I'm looking at you."

"With your heart in your eyes," suggested Beatrice mischievously. "Suppose you admit it. Wouldn't that proclaim you a representative of the coming humanity, when hearts will again become popular?"

"How logical!" exclaimed the king. "Of course, there must be forerunners of the new cycle, just as there were unhappy

laggards in the old, and to be a forerunner is indeed worth while!"

"Balderdash!" exclaimed Hicks Jarou, under his breath. "I'd better rescue my protege before he hangs himself with a rope of his own weaving."

"And the actions of a heart, even a modern specimen, are sometimes very interesting," continued Beatrice, demurely.

"Tell me about it," demanded the king, eagerly.

"Well. for one thing, the heart flutters when a certain person comes into one's presence, but never does so for any other."

"You have felt that?"

"Yes."

"You are very sure?"

"Oh, yes. I've observed its action a number of times."

"And the heart's emotion is always caused by the same person?"

"Always."

"I do not like that all!" exclaimed the king, angrily.

"Why not?" inquired Beatrice, innocently.

"Because you are not talking of me," and without another word he got up and stalked out of the room. He sought refuge in his own suite, nor could he be persuaded to return again that evening. The guests left as soon as they felt that they could without offending Hicks Jarou, and when they were all gone, that gentleman breathed a long sigh of relief, and growled that they had hung on as if they thought he had invited them to stay all night.

CHAPTER VII.

The reception Hicks Jaruo gave in honor of his illustrious guest took place one Saturday evening, and on the following day Alfred Burton walked home from church with Nathan Hawkins—just as he had been doing ever since that first Sunday when Nathan occupied his old pew. And he always went without an invitation.

It had become clearly evident to all who had known him as Lord Percy that Nathan Hawkins did not care to associate with any of them. He had a detached sort of way of looking at them which left them wondering whether he was looking through them or beyond them, and they felt a criticism in his gaze that was most aggravating, considering the circumstances. Had the man forgotten that he was the one who deserved the severest criticism? Alfred's friends could not understand what they called his insane infatuation for this man, whose life among them had revealed him as so utterly dishonorable and unworthy.

"Of course," they agreed, "there was the mystery of his death—terribly intriguing and all that—don't you know—but only for a time. There was no doubt but it was a put-up job if one could only get at the bottom of it, and anyhow one couldn't be expected to be interested in that forever."

It was generally agreed that the easiest way was to accept Nathan's statement that Hicks Jarou had managed to mend his heart and set it going again—and that some day that operation would be as common as the operation for appendicitis had become. This gave added interest to the picturesque personality of Hicks Jarou, and no one objected to that. It had become the fashion to expect that man to work wonders. It made him delightfully mysterious, and a most interesting topic of conversation. What society did object to was Alfred's devotion to a man who had

no place in the limelight. He didn't seem at all interested in Hicks Jarou, but he followed Nathan about like a pet dog. And why did he do it? When stripped of the aristocratic trappings of Lord Percy Southdown, there was nothing left, so far as society was concerned, that could possibly focus attention upon Nathan Hawkins. His former victims had quite speedily asserted their superiority to the workman, and to such purpose that even what he had done to them seemed to have been completely buried. They had reached a point where they could calmly ignore him—if only Alfred Burton would cease reminding them of him. Alfred was always doing something disconcerting and unexpected, they complained, but this latest obsession of his was enough to try the patience of all who cared for him. He had actually given the man an opportunity to make it appear that he was ignoring them.

There was a small group—a sort of inner circle of Royalton's smart set—that had formed the habit of meeting every Sunday afternoon; and since these informal parties had been organized, Alfred Burton had been the central figure. The others could not seem to have a good time without him. It was annoying to know that he now preferred to spend his Sunday afternoons with a mere mechanic like Nathan Hawkins.

"I didn't see you at the party last night," Alfred was saying, quizzically, as the two men seated themselves in Nathan's sparsely furnished work room, where a second comfortable chair had been installed since Burton had made it clear that he meant to force his company upon his somewhat unwilling host. That chair was the only evidence Burton had been given that his presence was ever more than barely tolerated.

"The party?" repeated Nathan; "Oh, I looked in," he added with his usual air of bored indifference when any matter of social interest was brought up.

"It didn't interest you?"

"It disgusted me. It made me wonder how in time I ever found any amusement in hoodwinking people of so little importance in the world."

"Seems to me that some of us are considered fairly important," replied Alfred, mildly.

"Your money is so reckoned," was the quick retort.

"You think we wouldn't amount to much if stripped of our possessions?"

"Precisely; and when you give the matter honest consideration you will agree with me."

"To some extent, perhaps. I'd never become Bolshevistic because deprived of wealth, however."

"You think I'm in danger of that?"

"I sometimes fear so."

"If you could know how little money means to me—nothing, absolutely nothing, unless it represents worthy achievement."

"I can believe that. I've heard that you refused to take back the ten thousand you willed to Potter. But your talk, Nat! You're getting cynical. You talk like a crank."

"Do I? I certainly do not care for that sort of reputation. I must put a guard on my tongue. Thank you for reminding me."

"You see, Nat, I happen to know some very fine people among the idle rich—as well as some who are not worth knowing. But, you know, you'll get that mixture in any social stratum. However, let's not argue about that today. What I'd like is your candid opinion of last night's party."

"I told you it didn't interest me."

"Yet it was given by a man whom you profess to admire."

"And I know he was bored to distraction. He felt that he owed it to his guest—whose mission here is, to say the least, peculiar—to give him an opportunity to meet Royalton's finest young ladies."

"But why the finest? Don't you think a kitchen mechanic would do very well?"

Nathan laughed. "He is fair skinned—but it seems to me he might find a suitable mate in the wilds of India. He has queer manners. I could see that he worried Jarou—yes and Runjeet Singh too."

"Runjeet Singh! Say, have you ever seen that third eye?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then it is really true! I didn't believe he had one."

"It is usually covered—and a good thing it is. It doesn't make him pleasant to look at at."

"Does he see with it?"

"I fancy he doesn't—as one sees with the two normal eyes—but I believe it helps him to see what the normal eye can't see at all. He is a fine fellow—in spite of his infirmity, and the best nurse in the world. He took me through the illness following my—eh—my accident. No trained nurse could have a tenderer touch or be more skillful. Of course he was under Jarou's orders all the time."

"You and Jarou are getting rather chummy, aren't you?"

"We often work together out here. I enjoy that. He has wonderful hands. I wish I could do as much with mine as he does with his. He would make the most marvelous surgeon this old world has ever known, if he'd give it his attention. But he is a born scientist—interested only in research work—and he says his time is too precious to be spent in fighting the Medical Trust as he would be obliged to do should he try to make his methods common property. However, we've talked that over enough, don't you think?"

"Yes. Frankly, just now I am more interested in King Omar-Kouli. Have you met him?"

"Yes, for a few minutes." Nat laughed at the recollection. "He came in here yesterday to ask me if trial marriages had become popular here. Of course I told him no. 'That's a mistake,' he replied. 'A king should have that advantage anyhow. But if not, could one ask the lady to sign a contract to produce at least three children?' He seemed to think that

should be done in a country like ours where women rule, and babies are not popular."

Alfred threw back his head and roared with laughter. "Oh" he gasped, "if I could only be permitted to hear him make that request of some of our modern girls."

"It would certainly be amusing," replied Nathan, joining in the laughter—"And I believe he'll do it."

The conversation was interrupted, at this point, by the entrance of Mrs. Somers. The two men stared in astonishment. She had not knocked for admittance—simply opened the door and walked in, and now stood before them smiling as serenely as if she had been sent for.

"Are you going to say that you are glad to see me?" she demanded vivaciously.

"No," replied Nat gravely. "I can't imagine why you came." Somehow the words did not sound as discourteous as they appear in print. They were a simple statement of fact, and were delivered without any sort of personal feeling. She had come. What was her errand? That was all.

"I had more than one reason for coming," was the reply, given with her usual sprightliness. She had no intention of taking offense, and she was determined not to leave until she got good and ready.

"May I sit down?" she asked.

"If you wish," was the non-committal reply.

"Won't you offer me a cup of tea?"

"I do not make it here. I eat in the servants' hall. You would hardly care to go there with me."

"No; no, frankly, I should not like that at all. Nor can I believe that you like it."

"It makes little difference to me where, what, or with whom I eat. I have other things more important to think about. You have not yet told me your errand."

"One reason for coming is to take Alfred Burton away with me."

"Yes? Well, that's all right."

"Now see here!" protested Alfred, "I don't like to be disposed of like one who needs a guardian."

"You promised to join us, today," Mrs. Somers reminded him, "and we don't propose to let you forget it."

"I won't forget it," agreed Alfred. "Cross my heart—I'll be there."

"You'll come with me," replied Mrs. Somers, firmly. Then turning to Nathan—"seems to me, Percy, you take a lot of Alfred's time."

"My name is Nathan Hawkins," he reminded her, "and Mr. Burton takes a lot of my time. Was there anything else?"

"Yes. We want you to be one of the speakers at a charitable entertainment we are planning to give."

"One of the speakers? What topic have you in mind?"

"Why, I thought if you'd tell us of your experience—"

"Hicks Jarou is the only one who could tell exactly what he did to my heart. He would be worth listening to."

"Oh, I don't mean anything scientific. That would be deadly dull. No one would pay to hear anything like that! But if you'd tell us how you felt—what you thought—"

"Which I will not do. I refuse to satisfy the curiosity of you and your friends."

"Oh, I've put it badly! We want to build a community house for working men and their wives—"

"If you'll take my advice you will let the working class alone. Why should you insist on making us objects of charity? Why not let us work out our own salvation!"

"But Nat," interrupted Alfred, "aren't you interested in making conditions better for those less fortunate than yourself?"

"Better? Most assuredly. I'll welcome anything that is a move to obtain justice for labor against capital. Give us that, and we'll soon get for ourselves all that is good for us. We

are not helped when we take gifts thrown at us as we throw a bone to a dog."

"How changed you are!" exclaimed Mrs. Somers. "I can hardly believe I ever knew you."

"You never did."

"You used to be so agreeable."

"That was my business—then. Thank God I've sloughed that all off."

"But couldn't you have done that without shooting yourself?"

Nathan made no reply.

"Do you know," continued Mrs. Somers audaciously—"I don't believe you did commit suicide."

"No?"

"No. How could you have stuffed yourself into a sewer after you'd shot yourself through the heart."

"That does look like a poser. But, you know, I might have gotten into the sewer before I fired the fatal shot. That is where my body really belonged."

"Some people laid it to Franklin Potter."

"Poor Franklin Potter."

"That reminds me of your will. Why did you say that you pitied him so greatly?"

"Hadn't you better ask him? I don't enjoy gossip about anyone with whom I associate."

The emphasis on the personal pronoun was not to be ignored. Even Mrs. Somers had to admit that she had been reprimanded.

"You are not a gentleman," she snapped—

"No," was the quiet reply—"just a workman."

"Are you coming with me, Alfred? Or will you leave me to make my way unattended."

"I will come with you, of course. But don't think," to Nat, "that I'm not coming here again, for I am, and very soon."

"And next time," replied Nat, with a fleeting smile, "you'll jack me up for being rude."

"You bet *I* will, you old porcupine," said Alfred with decided warmth. He was really vexed with his best friend, and meant to make him feel ashamed of his behavior.

"Well," laughed Mrs. Somers, when they were well away from the cottage, "I got it that time, didn't I?"

"You really deserved it, you know," replied Alfred, lazily.

"Of course I did!" was the hearty response. "I had no business butting in as I did. But oh, how I do wish Beatrice Willis had been there!"

"Why?"

"I'd have liked to study her reaction. Do you know, I think she was really fond of Percy Southdown."

"I never thought so."

"Well, she'd have liked him today. I did."

Alfred stood still in his astonishment, and stared at her. "You don't mean that!" he exclaimed.

"I certainly do. Sort of cave man stuff he handed out, you know. I fancy most women enjoy that occasionally."

"Well, I'll be damned! Wait, while I look up a club to hit you over the head with—"

"No use, Alfred, you couldn't do it convincingly. That isn't your style."

"I think I could learn," replied Alfred hopefully.

"Wonder how it would do for you to learn of King Omar-Kouli?" Mrs. Somers actually giggled. "He is the most original specimen of humanity I ever saw! You'd never guess what he said to me at the reception."

"Did you get him alone for a *tete-a-tet*, as you threatened?"

"Did I! Do I ever threaten in vain when it comes to planning a good old-fashioned flirtation? Listen; I saw him stalking away from Beatrice, so I blocked his progress and lured him to a quiet nook, and we sat down together—quite near—I allowed my shoulder to touch his—"

"I know. You've done it to me. Get on with the story."

"The king suddenly faced me, and placed both hands on my ribs, pressing hard like an osteopath. 'No!' he said as if talking to himself, 'no, you wouldn't do; you've worn your corsets too tight. There's a depressed seam in your liver, your breast bone is deformed, your intestines are pressed downwards, and a hump is forming on the back of your neck! No use wasting time on you. Goodby!' Then he stalked off to his own room and left me sitting there alone—for which I was very grateful—for if I couldn't have laughed then and there I should have burst open."

"He needs a good healthy fist dancing on his nose," said Alfred almost savagely.

"No, really! Do you know, he is the first absolutely natural man I ever saw. He knows what he wants, and sees no reason why he should conceal his desires, and no reason why he should pretend to admire someone whom he doesn't admire at all. I rather like that in him."

"You get absolutely furious when I offer the tiniest criticism."

"I know it. And I can't explain the difference. Anyhow, the king thinks he's shut me out of his little matrimonial conquest, and I'm wondering if I'd get a thrill if I tried to prove that he has another thought coming."

"It might prove a disagreeable experience."

"Very likely. I do wish I knew what he said to Beatrice Willis."

"Why do you care?"

"She evidently angered him. If I could guess what her reply was like, I'd make mine different when he said the same thing to me."

"But just why do you care what that man thinks?"

"I suppose because he's so different from anyone else I've ever known. I think it would be exciting and fascinating and just a little dangerous to make a playmate of him—and so I want to try."

CHAPTER VIII.

A week had passed since the evening of the magnificent reception given in honor of King Omar-Kouli—and people were telling one another that some period of each day since that event, Beatrice Willis and the king had spent together. The king was rushing her, there could be no doubt of that. They believed that he had decided whom he wanted for the future queen of Tyrsanghee. The question of greatest interest to them now was “will Beatrice marry the king?” Mrs. Somers declared, with a comfortable sigh, that she supposed it was up to her to find out, and so the afternoon tea at the home of Mrs. Willis was unusually well attended that day.

Beatrice was not at home when they first arrived. Mrs. Willis explained that she had gone for a walk with the king and had not yet returned.

“Will you recognize old friends when you have a king for a son-in-law?” asked Mrs. Somers, audaciously.

“How can I tell before it happens,” replied Mrs. Willis with a slight smile.

“Don’t you know whether Beatrice will accept him? Anyone can see that it is in her hands.”

“Beatrice has not confided in me,” replied Mrs. Willis, candidly, “and I’m hoping she won’t. It is a matter that I should not feel able to help decide.”

“She has always been rather unexpected,” continued Mrs. Somers; “one never knows what she’ll do next.”

“Oh, yes we do,” put in Alfred Burton; “all that is necessary is to know what the other fellow is going to do. Beatrice will do the opposite. Haven’t you noticed that? She usually likes the people the rest of us don’t care for — and she’s always on the side of the under dog in any of our social squabbles.”

At this moment Beatrice entered the room—alone. “Where is the king?” demanded several voices in unison.

“He said he’d appear later. Said something about changing for the occasion.”

“Then he must consider it a very unusual occasion,” exclaimed another of the guests. “For an aristocrat, it does seem to me that he is horribly careless about his personal appearance.”

“What do mere garments amount to when one has the face and figure of a god,” demanded Mrs. Somers.

“And the manners of a South Sea Islander,” added Alfred Burton.

“He is a South Sea Islander,” said Beatrice defensively. “Do you know,” she continued, “I think it is a shame to make fun of the stranger within our gates. Do you think we’d do better if we were visiting Tyrsanghee?”

“Where is Tyrsanghee?” asked Alfred.

“About four hundred miles from Tahiti. It is quite a large island. Mr. Jarou showed me—on the map. It doesn’t bear that name. He changed to Tyrsanghee when he became interested in the island.”

“One of the Polynesian group?”

“I think not, although there are Polynesians living there.”

“And he is training Sikhs to live there, also.”

“He wishes civilized ways of living to be introduced there—and the Sikhs are ambitious and pliable.”

“Pliable! That’s the word I’ve been wanting. Seems to me no other word would fit into Jarou’s plans for the world.”

“We’re not interested in Hicks Jarou,” interrupted Mrs. Somers, “but in that most surprising guest of his. I never saw a man who seemed so absolutely different from everyone else in the world.”

“Then you haven’t seen much of Nathan Hawkins,” offered Alfred Burton. “He is the most surprising man I know—and the most interesting.”

"Oh, don't drag him into the conversation," replied Mrs. Willis petulantly. "We have already had enough of him."

"No, you keep quiet, Alfred, and let Beatrice have the floor," coaxed Mrs. Somers. "Come on, Beatrice, be a good girl and save our lives."

"Save your lives?"

"Yes, we're dying of curiosity. Do tell us just what you think of King Omar-Kouli."

"Well, of all the nerve!"

"I've a right to know," persisted Mrs. Somers. "If you would let him alone, I think there'd be a pretty good chance for me. I interest him immensely. It is only fair to tell me what you think of him."

"Why, to be frank with you, I don't think of him at all when I'm not with him; and when I am with him I'm kept so busy answering questions that I can think of nothing else."

"What questions:—'do you love me?' 'will you be mine?' questions like that?"

"Oh, no; the king doesn't believe in love."

"He doesn't!"

"That's what he says."

"Wonder how he expects to propose?"

"I don't believe he expects to propose. When he gets good and ready to talk business I imagine he'll say to the girl of his choice, 'woman, we start for Tyrsanghee tomorrow.'"

"What if she objects?"

"In that case, he'll probably drag her along by the hair."

"Regular cave-man stuff! Well, that's the impression he gives. I wondered if you'd noticed it."

"And do you think," asked Alfred, "that any modern girl who casts her vote, will stand for anything like that?"

"Why not?" demanded Beatrice. "The vote doesn't amount to anything at all when something of greater interest is offered. Women clamored for equal rights because they were bored to death by a world of uninteresting men.' "

"Hear! hear!" applauded several of the guests.

"No one can accuse the king of being commonplace," added Mrs. Somers. "He certainly is diverting."

"He keeps one thinking," added Beatrice. "Is there anyone else in our set who has more to offer?"

"There are a few," replied Alfred, "who pride themselves upon being gentlemen."

"Gentlemen?" scoffed Beatrice; "and who defines the term? Our men are mostly too conceited—too well pleased with themselves, to even try to be gallant. They are too selfish to care how their behavior may impress others. They are too lazy to become well informed on any subject. They have so little self-respect that they would allow any woman to support them. Gentlemen! I'll take the savage in preference, any time!"

"Ha, ha!" crowed Mrs. Somers; "now we've found out what we have been wanting to know. It took a combination of king and cave-man to win our Beatrice!"

"Who knows he is a king?" queried Alfred Burton.

"Hasn't Franklin Potter said so?"

"I haven't been able to make him say so in a way that convinces me," continued Alfred. "He usually quotes Hicks Jarou—"

"Sensible man," exclaimed a quiet voice at the door, and Hicks Jarou entered, unannounced, as was his habit. The guests looked uncomfortable, but he appeared more genial than usual. "I seem to have arrived at an opportune moment," he added, "for I happen to know that my friend is as much a king as human laws can make him. In this day, who really believes in the divine right of kings? You may believe me, however, when I tell you that Omar-Kouli is a king, and that his kingdom of Tyrsanghee contains more square miles than England."

"And even so he might not be very wealthy," replied Mrs. Somers.

"He is wealthy in his own right, and Tyrsanghee is prosperous. In fact, it has exceedingly rich mineral deposits that have

scarcely been tapped as yet. Not only that, but one day all I have will belong to Omar-Kouli."

"He is to be your heir!" exclaimed Mrs. Somers in a tone of awe. "How fortunate for him."

"Many a king would be glad to get what I shall leave behind me," replied Hicks Jarou, in a manner so matter-of-fact that it could not be considered in any way boastful.

"Isn't your great friendship for him a little surprising?" ventured Mrs. Somers; "not that King Omar-Kouli is in any way unworthy," she hastened to add, "but he is so—so—different and you seem so wrapped up in your scientific studies—you can see, can't you, what a very interesting problem you have become to us old gossips?"

Hicks Jarou was generous. He was there for that purpose. He had known of the comments concerning the king, as well as himself, and he felt that the time had come for the citizens of Royalton to be thinking as he desired them to think.

"It is difficult," he said, "for those who have not lived in Tyrsanghee to understand one of its people. I hardly know how to tell you that you really have no idea of the romance concerning my friend—he doesn't do himself justice in any way. I worry whenever he comes among you because I am so sure he will do or say something that you can't understand since his way of thinking is that of the man who has not been spoiled by civilization. He is absolutely natural—far more truthful than any of us—and in most ways better worth knowing. But even so, my heart is not so wrapped in him, personally, as it is in what he represents—and that you cannot understand until you spend some months in Tyrsanghee — as I hope you will all do before many years have passed."

Hicks Jarou was his most charming self as he said this. They all felt more closely drawn to him than had been possible before. He seemed to have withdrawn the barrier between them that they had all felt, more or less, and which all had resented—but now he was absolutely lovable.

"By the way," he asked, turning to Beatrice, "where is my friend? He told me he would be here this afternoon."

"He told me so, too," replied Beatrice. "After our walk, he said he would go to the house and dress for the occasion."

"Dress for the occasion!" repeated Hicks Jarou, who was evidently puzzled.

"That's what he said," replied Beatrice, "and he had quite an air of mystery when he said it.' "

"If you'll excuse me," said Hicks Jarou, bowing before Mrs. Willis, "I'll go and see what he is up to. I'll bring him back with me—but probably not dressed for the occasion — as he may be planning to be. You see, he has often expressed a desire to come here in his native dress—"

"Oh, do let him come that way," interrupted Mrs. Somers. "We are all crazy to see him in native dress."

Hicks Jarou took his departure, a cryptic smile on his face, and without having promised to gratify their desire to see his guest in native dress.

He could not have gone more than a block from the house before the king entered. He had approached the house from the opposite direction, and had evidently given a large part of Royalton the opportunity to see him in the garments he had found in one of the rooms where the Sikhs slept. As he turned to enter the house, a small army of boys who had been following him gave a final yell of delight before dispersing. They had seen a policeman in the distance, and knew that discretion was usually considered the better part of valor.

King Omar-Kouli's costume consisted of a long strip of tapa cloth wrapped around his body, covering him from just under his arms to his knees. On his head he wore a wreath of dried leaves, and a wide band of shells encircled his neck. As a matter of comfort he retained his silk socks and oxfords. Society gasped. Mrs. Willis was the most uncomfortable woman in civilization. She hated to have Hicks Jarou in her home,

but now she prayed for his speedy return. How else could she hope to get rid of King Omar-Kouli!

"Now you feel really comfortable, I suspect," said Alfred genially. "Not much about that costume to restrict the circulation."

"Shouldn't you like to get rid of that stiff collar?" inquired the king—"and the B.V.D.'s that feel as if they'd split one clear up to the neck—and the shirt that is always crawling up—"

"Hold on!" interrupted Alfred. "Have a heart, man! Why should we make public all our woes!"

"Well, I thought you were about to criticize me—and that I'd better get my criticism in first."

"Far be it from me to criticize you! Hicks Jarou has just been telling us what a wonderful man you are."

"Hicks Jarou!" with a short scornful laugh; "you couldn't convince him that he really knows absolutely nothing about me—the real me! Yet that is a fact."

"What do you mean—the real you?" asked Mrs. Somers, quickly.

"Haven't you discovered," asked the king quite mysteriously "that Jarou doesn't believe in life after death? He doesn't believe in the soul—or the astral body—or anything that he can't see and feel and take apart and put together again. Such a man cannot know anything at all about humanity that is worth knowing."

"He is a wonderful scientist," said Beatrice, coldly.

"Oh, I suppose so," replied the king, as if bored to distraction; "but what of it?"

"What do you think is the most necessary characteristic of the successful scientist," asked Mrs. Somers, wickedly. She had seen Hicks Jarou enter the house, and hoped he'd enter the room in time to hear something of the opinion of his protege.

"Madam," replied the king, seriously, "the successful scientist must have indestructible guts."

For a moment an appalling silence reigned in that room. No one knew what to say next, or whether they could say anything without collapsing in uncontrollable laughter.

"The king has evidently read his Francis Galton to good purpose," said Hicks Jarou smoothly. "If you remember what he said—but perhaps you have not read him. However, he taught that any man, to become great along any line, should have a sound visceral organization."

"Oh, yes," gasped Mrs. Somers. "And do you think it necessary for the great scientist to believe in a soul?"

Beatrice had made her escape, and from the corner of his eye Hicks Jarou noticed that the king had promptly followed her. He knew that the king had come dressed as the King of Tyrsanghee with the belief that he should be dressed that way when he meant to demand a lady as his queen. He would have prevented that exhibition if he could — but fate had circumvented him. Now he would do his best to entertain the company and give the king time. So he told them, in the most interesting manner at his command, enough of the human machine to make it clear that it was a machine and nothing more—that it worked perfectly as long as every part was kept in order and that it became cranky when not properly cared for. When it outlived its usefulness, it was thrown aside—"

"By whom?" asked Mrs. Somers.

"By relatives and friends—just as we throw aside anything that is no longer pleasant to have about. Either burn or bury it—and go about our business until it is our turn to be burned or buried. As for a soul escaping—that's all childish nonsense."

"Yes, I suppose it is," assented Mrs. Somers, who was frankly yawning, and then she provided escape for the other guests by announcing that she had stayed a fearfully long time—had never enjoyed an afternoon more, but that she must now toddle along. Soon all the guests had left, except Hicks Jarou. They left messages for Beatrice who had not returned, and they looked as if they could all guess why. Of course she

would not remain in the garden alone with the king—especially after he had made such an appalling exhibition of himself—unless she meant to ignore custom and accept the man as he was.

“Have you told Beatrice that you borrowed money from me,” asked Hicks Jarou, as soon as Mrs. Willis and he were alone.

“I have not. I saw no reason why she should be worried about a business matter that she cannot change.”

“But, you know,” replied Jarou, softly, “she might be able to change it — to your liking.”

“By the way—that note—” Jarou looked as if he did not understand, thus forcing her to explain. “You said you would bring a note for me to sign—”

“Oh, that! I’ve been too busy even to think about it. But why worry? Why not enjoy your home to the last minute?”

The last minute! The words sent a cold chill down her spine. The last minute! What did he mean by that! It sounded sinister. Was there some crowning humiliation in store for her? At that moment Beatrice entered the room alone.

“Where is the king?” asked Jarou.

“Gone home to put on some clothes,” replied Beatrice, adding quickly, “I knew you would be mortified because he came here, as he did, and so I kept him out of sight until everyone had left the house.”

“That was thoughtful of you. Tell me, did his appearance shock you?”

“A little.”

“Mrs. Willis,” he then said, quite irrelevantly, “may I have a word with your daughter, — alone?”

“Better ask her,” replied the mother tartly. “She does as she pleases.”

“Thank you,” replied Hicks Jarou suavely, as he held the door open for her, and then closed it carefully, and seated himself opposite Beatrice.

“I did not tell those tiresome people,” he began without preamble, “that Omar-Kouli’s wife is destined to become the

mother of a new race — a race that will become the inspiration of all future scientists. It is a glorious destiny.” His eyes shone with the brilliant light of the true scientist, and Beatrice thought she had never seen him look so handsome—so manly—so well worth knowing—so absolutely desirable. Still, she was very tired, too tired to talk, and she wished he would go and give her an opportunity to rest. She felt that her day had been hard enough, and she had a faint presentiment that she was about to hear something that would not please her at all.

“You did not tell the others,” she said, speculatively; “why do you tell me?”

She was hoping to hear him reply that he told her because she was the only one with sufficient mentality to understand him. Ever since she had known him she had hoped he would say something like that. She really believed that no one else in Royaltown understood him as well—and someday she would know the joy of hearing him say so. What she did hear staggered her, it was so entirely unexpected.

“Beatrice,” he said softly, pleadingly, with his soul in his eyes, “Beatrice, dear little girl, I am hoping you will marry Omar-Kouli.”

“I marry—that king! I? You are hoping that?”

“Yes, Beatrice. I cannot tell you how much I hope—”

“Don’t say it. I shall do nothing of the sort.”

“Don’t Beatrice! Don’t decide against him like that! Take time to consider—if you wish—but don’t decide against him unless you must. This means as much to me as it does to him. If you refuse to marry him, it will be the greatest disappointment of my career.”

“I don’t see why you should care—like that.”

“I’ll tell you someday—perhaps very soon. Don’t decide against him until you know what that would mean to me. You have no idea how I have depended upon you. I was so sure you would marry him. Think, child, he can give you everything you want—”

"Except love," interrupted Beatrice.

"Love is a small matter compared to what you may mean to the scientific world—"

"I hate your scientific world."

"I do not believe that. You are the only one who has mind enough to understand—but of that later. You will give the king his hearing? For my sake?"

"Suppose I prefer someone else!"

"Do you?"

"I have met a man who makes all other men seem insignificant."

"Who is he? You can tell your best friend, can't you? You have called me your best friend—"

"You are," replied Beatrice, quickly, "you mean more to me than—than—well, I can tell you things that I couldn't tell my own mother."

"Then you can surely tell me the name of this man who threatens my happiness."

"Your happiness!" Beatrice blushed divinely, but the obtuse scientist never noticed it.

"Why, yes, Beatrice. I have told you that I'd be most happy if you were to marry King Omar-Kouli."

"Oh!" Beatrice showed disappointment. "I remember that you said something of the sort," she replied carelessly.

"This other man," pursued Hicks Jarou, "won't you tell me who he is?"

"No-o-o. Not now. I'm feeling so very different from what I ever expected to feel—shy and happy, you know, and I just want to keep his name to myself as long as possible. I'm telling you this much because you wish me to marry the king, and—and I don't see how I can."

"But, Beatrice, my child, this other man may not be worthy."

"Oh, he is worthy," replied Beatrice, who was now on the verge of tears. "My great trouble is that I'm not sure whether or not he cares for me."

"Then there is no promise between you?"

"No. But the more I think about the matter the more sure I am that it would be quite impossible for me to marry any other man. And I'm so worried because I know my mother expects me to marry."

"And you feel that you should do as she wishes?"

"I owe it to her. If this man I care for—Oh, if he only could come to care for me—then everything would be all right!"

"But if he should not—then what becomes of your mother? The king will be patient—I think. Wouldn't it be wise—wouldn't it be loyal to your mother to consider him? Don't you think, my child, that you could bring yourself to do it?"

"Oh, I don't know. I don't know."

"As his queen, you could give your mother every comfort. You could make her remaining years very beautiful."

"I have thought of that. I'd like to be able to do it. My mother has spent so much on me that she has endangered her own future."

"I know. You certainly owe her a great deal."

"If I could only earn money—"

"Think how much you'd have to earn to keep your mother in the style to which she is accustomed."

"She could live more simply—"

"I'm sure she doesn't think so. She wouldn't be happy. You must think of her happiness as well as of her comfort—don't you think?"

"Oh, I know it! I know it! She hasn't a suspicion about this other man—you'll keep my secret?"

"Need you ask?"

"No, no; there is no one in the world that I trust as I do you."

"Thank you," replied Hicks Jarou gravely. "That is the finest compliment I ever had."

"Of course I told the king—"

"Told the king?"

"That I'd given my heart to another—"

"You told the king that!"

"I thought it only fair—under the circumstances—he—he—seemed so sure he owned me—"

"How did he take it? Was he very much upset?"

"I don't know. He looked odd. He said 'well, that ends it; I'll take off this blasted regalia!' then he hurried away without another word."

"Pardon me," interrupted Hicks Jarou, hastily, "if I leave without speaking to your mother. What you say worries me. I must go to the king at once."

CHAPTER IX.

Hicks Jarou had never made better time than when he covered the distance between the Willis residence and his own. The scientist who had appeared so superior to ordinary vexation was now decidedly a prey to an anxiety that must surely be caused by something of greater moment than a host's care for his guest's comfort or disappointment.

He was met at his door by Runjeet Singh, who looked no less anxious than his master. "I'm glad you are here," he said, gravely. "The body has been demanding that you be sent for."

"When did he come in?"

"Less than an hour ago."

"How did he appear?"

"Very much perturbed. Angry, too, excessively angry. He said he wasn't going to wait forever to speak with you, and if I did not send for you I'd be damned sorry!"

"The independent cuss!" grinned Hicks Jarou. "Did you ever see anything like it? Isn't he as real as anyone you know? Runjeet, I'm the greatest scientist the world has ever seen."

Hicks Jarou and his servant entered the rooms that had been set apart for the king.

"Well," said the scientist brusquely, "what do you want now?"

"Aren't you rather impolite to a king?" was the smiling response. "In what royal court did you receive your training?" he added insolently.

"In public I give you such consideration as I wish others to show you; but in private, neither you nor I will forget that you are my creature."

"You made this body, and you made a very good job of it, too, I'm willing to grant that; but my dear man, you didn't

make me, and you don't own me, you can neither keep me nor command my obedience."

Hicks Jarou looked his amazement. "What in time do you mean?" he asked, "I wonder if what you say really means anything to you."

"Oh, I know you won't understand. But I mean just what I say, and I say just what I mean. I'm not a puppet. You've played with materialism so long that you can't and won't believe in anything you can't dissect and put under your microscope. You've actually been believing that the chemical compounds you've stirred together, and baked in your old incubator, and called brain matter, are responsible for the movements of this body."

"So they are! A reaction took place—"

"Reaction fiddlesticks! What took place is this: I saw you working over this body, and decided to step in and make myself at home. I wanted to try earth life again—just to see if I'd enjoy it as I did when I was here before."

"Who do you think you are?" asked the scientist with all the scorn born of his scientific knowledge.

"I know who I am," was the earnest reply; "I've known that ever since that day about forty-seven years ago, when I committed suicide because a girl rejected me, and I found myself walking about among old friends whom I could see, touch and hear, but who could never be made to realize that I was anywhere except in the grave where they had placed my body."

Hicks Jarou looked at Runjeet and smiled tolerantly. "We have allowed him to listen to Nat Hawkins more than is good for him. Nat believes all this rot about entities that live independently of the body."

"Nat knows," said the king.

"He has hypnotized himself," retorted Hicks Jarou, "and doesn't know how to awaken himself from his trance. There is nothing in what he says that I can't prove or disprove in my laboratory."

"Don't be too sure of that," replied the king. "Better keep an open mind and try to learn something. I'm about to give you the opportunity. I leave this body tonight."

"W-h-a-t! What's that you say! You are leaving—"

"Leaving this body. I leave it in as good condition as I found it. I appreciate your kindness in permitting me to use it. You must admit, however, that I have taken pretty good care of it."

"You think you are something that can go out of that body?"

"I know I am."

"Nonsense. You are the result of chemical combinations—"

The king laughed. "Poor, blind scientist!" he said, "life hasn't taught you very much, has it? How long will it take you to learn—I wonder if you ever will learn—that there is something that can live either in or out of a material body!"

Hicks Jarou smiled in his most superior way. "When I see you outside the body," he replied, "what you say may seem more plausible. I believe what I can see, hear, touch, smell or taste. I know exactly how you came to be—"

"How this old shell came to be," interrupted the king. "I tell you that this body—or any body, is absolutely nothing in itself. When I leave, you'll have to tuck this old shell back into that incubator where I found it, and keep it going by artificial methods just as you've been doing all these years."

"My master cannot understand," interrupted Three Eyes, "but I do. He does not believe in the doctrine of a soul. But I do. I am sure you can leave that body if you wish—but why should you? It is in perfect condition—shows no sign of wear—is good to look at—is well provided for—why leave?"

The king, embarrassed, answered evasively. "Well—there is a reason."

"Has it anything to do with Beatrice Willis?"

"I may as well admit it." And an expression of pain flitted across the handsome face. "Miss Willis won't become my mate, and life on earth without her is not attractive, so I leave."

"Don't be in a hurry!" pleaded the scientist, quite forgetting, in his anxiety, how he had scoffed at the possibility of his leaving at all; "if that's your trouble, just wait.. I have influence over Beatrice. She will change her mind."

"I don't want a wife who does not wish to live with me, and—Beatrice loves you!"

"Love! Don't repeat that detestable word. It means less than nothing."

"It did to me," replied the king, simply, "until that girl convinced me. I now believe in love. I repeat—"

"Don't trouble yourself," interrupted Jarou, who showed unusual and quite unnecessary irritability. He turned to Three Eyes—"The body is out of order, its brain is not functioning properly. We'll look it over carefully."

"Hear him!" the king laughed hilariously. "I've just told him news that any man should rejoice to hear, and he says it comes from a disordered brain."

Hicks Jarou's eyes blazed angrily. "Let me hear no more of your nonsense," he said curtly. "Go to bed."

"Don't hurry me," replied the king merrily, "you wouldn't, if only you could believe that this is my last night on earth. Let me enjoy myself. Heavens! but all that play-acting was tiresome!"

"Play-acting!" Jarou was scornful. "You've been behaving like a damned clown. Do you mean to tell me you weren't doing as well as you could?"

"I was playing the savage king to the best of my ability. Didn't I do it right? I seemed to be making a hit."

"You succeeded in disgusting the girl I wanted you to marry!"

"No doubt about her being disgusted."

"But if you can do better—there's still time—I'll pave the way—"

"No thank you; I'm done. I'm quite through—this experience is almost ended. Understand, old top, can't you? I'm absolutely through with this hand-me-down!"

"Hand-me-down!"

"Listen. You haven't discovered the secret of life, and you never will. This body lives and grows under artificial stimulus, but it will never move independently."

"How have you been living the past month if not independently?"

"I haven't lived. I've just been moving this body. Why won't you understand! You'll have to believe in independent spiritual life tomorrow, when you are forced to shove this body back into your incubator; but this evening, I'd like to have you listen with an open mind, for I want to tell you something about love."

"Love! Delusion! There is no such thing as love."

"Jarou, old friend, you will never be a great scientist until you can understand love."

"Put him to bed," ordered Hicks Jarou of Three Eyes, and impatiently left the room.

Hicks Jarou considered the human body simply as a machine whose function it was to convert one kind of energy into another—a machine made of protoplasm which possessed the power to assimilate nourishment and grow. He had constructed a body which lived and grew under the influence of the mechanical devices he had invented to provide necessary artificial respiration, the proper amount of heat, and a well controlled circulation of a very good imitation of blood. He had believed that this body started into independent existence when the chemicals composing it had worked themselves into a certain condition; and now that this creature he had created proved to have sufficient mind to tell him things quite different from his purely scientific deductions, he presented a problem that required further study. He could see the matter in no other light. If this machine he had constructed seemed to be acting independently, and against his wishes and plans, then there must be some complication that he had not provided against. But to believe some floating astral—bah! that led to the old belief

in black magic. He would have nothing of that! And he was not to be blamed so much as pitied for his delusions. He had long ago accepted the view point of the materialistic school—had been true to his convictions—had been giving the best years of his life to an attempt to prove his point—and had succeeded in creating a very wonderful body by artificial means—a body so nearly perfect that it could hardly be distinguished from the real article.

But something had gone wrong. He had willed his machine to act along certain lines, and suddenly it had announced its intention to disobey him. Evidently something had gone wrong with one of the glands. The endocrine system had furnished his most difficult problem from the start. He had never felt quite satisfied with the tissue used for the intestinal gland, and he wasn't exactly comfortable about the pituitary. He believed either of these might prove to be the cause of his present problem.

Three Eyes entered the room where Hicks Jarou had forgotten his perplexities over the king, in a careful examination of a human heart that he had long had in pickle. He had meant to study the gland textures, but for some reason the heart had intrigued him. Could that bit of muscle so react as to cause the emotion known as love? If so, just what took place? Which nerve was responsible?

"You'd better come," said Three Eyes, tersely, "the body is like a log."

The scientist hastily followed his servant to the bedroom of the king. The body lay on the bed, carefully dressed in a faultless evening dress. The face, freshly shaven, was of the hue of death. In one stiff and icy hand was a note addressed to Hicks Jarou.

"I'm leaving the body in good condition, as you see. I must tell you that I have found it very much more comfortable than the one I wore when last on earth, but even a satisfactory body

can not hold me here any longer. I shall try to find another tenant for you and it. It must be returned to the incubator before it shows signs of decomposition."

As he tore the king's note into shreds, Hicks Jarou was more nearly discouraged than he had ever been in his life. He had created something that he did not understand and could not control. The body was returned to the incubator and the man who had made it wearily left the room. Three Eyes followed him. A long night was to be spent in scientific research, but that was not so bad. They had often worked all night. As long as Hope beckoned it was interesting. After many hours, Three Eyes spoke.

"Well," he said, "I go back to the astral theory."

"And I believe now that my mistake lies in the composition of that brain. I see that I have not yet discovered all there is to know about the manufacture of mind."

"And you never will, for mind is the manifestation of the spirit within the body."

"You actually seem to believe that this body was inhabited by a wandering astral—who has now vacated it!"

"I'm convinced of that. And I'm ready to declare that even a wandering astral is better than nothing. It certainly made this body seem more human."

"I won't believe it!" exclaimed Hicks Jarou, vehemently. "To believe that would be to destroy all my hopes of starting a new race."

"No, no!" protested Three Eyes; "you may still look forward to a race physically perfect as a result of your research, even though you may be forced to admit that matter must be moved by spirit. I believe another astral will take possession and the body will move again. Should that happen, I mean to question it very carefully."

Hicks Jarou grudgingly admitted that Three Eyes might be right, and that was nearer an admission that he himself might be wrong, than he had ever before made.

When assured of the well being of the body the scientist retired—but not to sleep. His brain seemed to be in a whirl. What if Runjeet Singh were right in his spiritualistic theory? He knew that there had been a time when it was almost universal belief—in the dark days before the scientist disputed the silly notion—that the soul enjoyed life everlasting. The world was less sure of that now, thanks to the scientist; but—had the scientist been wrong? Was there a life after death? A place where souls could meet? If so, and some day his soul were to meet that of Beatrice in this other world that people talked about, what would she say to his present plans for her? She trusted him. He believed she would be guided by him. To be coolly set aside as the mother of a new race which was to spring from an incubator made of asbestos—would she approve of that? Evidently, she would not. She had refused to marry the king! Very few girls would have the courage and independence to refuse a king anything. But Beatrice was in a class by herself. She had refused the hand of a king! Refused the hand of a king! The words sang themselves over and over again in his brain, and a most disconcerting current of warm blood coursed through his being, confusing his mind and distracting his attention.

“The human heart-flutter!” he suddenly exclaimed. “I felt it. It acted independently of my brain. It was a pleasant sensation.”

For the first time he wavered. Perhaps he had been wrong. He had manufactured many hearts that beat rhythmically; but they never fluttered and then resumed their rhythm; instead, they stopped beating after a preliminary flutter, because there was something wrong with their mechanism. Was there something about the human heart he had not yet learned? His deductions might not have been quite right—but no! he simply could not believe that. They were right. Of course they were right. They could not be wrong, and yet—”

"I will not think along that line," he exclaimed—quite violently interrupting his new and disconcerting line of thought. "My work proves that I have been right. I know that the heart is a partially ossified muscle designed to pump blood through the body—that, and nothing more."

Then he began to whip his brain into obedience to his will, and never once thought to ask himself what it was that took command, and how the thing called Will first came into being.

"Nothing can interrupt my work," he chanted, "nothing, nothing, nothing. I am wedded to biology. I am the greatest scientist in the world. Nothing shall come between me and my life work."

But sleep wouldn't come. This was his problem: To assume that the heart could feel a sensation, not brought about by the will, or by some derangement of the system, and to further assume that said sensation could be communicated to some other heart—why, where would such conclusions lead. To admit that was to admit that the heart possessed the power of choice. Not only that, but the power to make the choice known! Worse than that, the power to declare against a wise selection—perhaps the power to compel response in another heart! It was unthinkable!

"Come, come!" he said to himself, "this will never do. Some malign planetary influence must be mixing its magnetism with mine." And he forced himself to focus his attention upon the great biological experiment that he believed would forever upset the accepted tenets of civilization. He decided to go back to his laboratory where he had that heart in pickle, and study it until he had learned its secret. He would dissect it and assure himself beyond the shadow of doubt that it contained no brain matter.

"And if I find brain matter," he concluded, "I will mold it to my purpose. Nothing shall stand between me and my work. Life has nothing to offer that can possibly equal the joy of scientific research. And when the world knows of my accom-

plishment, when I am recognized as the greatest scientist that ever lived—”

Hicks Jarou worked an hour or two in his laboratory, and returned to his room convinced that the human heart contained no brain matter. It could not think. It could not act on any other heart. It was simply a bit of partially ossified muscle—just as he had decided years ago. His mind was at rest, and he quickly dropped into slumber, after deciding to give careful thought on the morrow to the structure and the tissue of the endocrines.

CHAPTER X.

Hicks Jarou awoke early, dressed with his usual scrupulous care, breakfasted on an assortment of little cubes containing compounds for the repair and upkeep of the human frame; then called Three Eyes and they went, together, to inspect the occupant of the incubator. They found the body yawning and stretching quite naturally as it had been doing in its bed every morning for the past month.

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed Hicks Jarou with exultation, "now see who's right! Didn't I tell you it would be working as usual when we had fixed it?"

"It certainly looks as if the interstitial had been faulty," admitted Runjeet, somewhat grudgingly.

"No doubt about it," interrupted Hicks Jarou impatiently. "Last night I corrected the formula for the chemicals used in the hormones—and also applied a unilateral vasoligature,—and I don't see how we could ask for better proof of my theory."

"Let's take the patient out," said Runjeet, who believed there was nothing to be gained by emphasizing the old adage concerning the man who is convinced against his will; but he certainly held to his own opinion that the manufactured body could not move—would never move without the help of some living entity. The two men hastily opened up the incubator, pulled out the body and carried it to a chair.

"Hand me a Mother Hubbard," demanded the body, "quick! quick, I tell you—and don't look at me until I get into it."

The voice was that of a woman. The mannerisms of a woman were all too evident. She put her hands to her head as if to fix her hair. "Who cut my hair?" she demanded, shrilly. "Who dared do that! Why was it done. I'm not one of the bobbed-hair class. Why didn't you ask my permission? Give me my hat. Say," as a new thought struck her,

"why are you men here anyhow? Who undressed me and put me in that box? I'll have you know I'm a respectable woman. Are you doctors? Think I'm sick? Then where's the nurse?"

Hicks Jarou looked as if turned to stone. He could not speak or move, but dropped helplessly into a convenient chair. Three Eyes brought out an elegant dressing gown that had been made for Omar-Kouli, and handed it to the body, that was standing crouched over to hide at least a portion of its nudity.

"This looks as if it had been made for a man," she objected, "but it will do until I get my own clothes." A moment, and then came a piercing shriek.

"My God!" exclaimed the voice as the body stood up to don the garment, "this is a man's body! What have you done to me? I'm not a man!"

"This is an excellent body, well made and in good repair," said Three Eyes firmly.

"I don't care how good it is," said the voice; "what do I want of a man's body! I'm a prima donna. Oh, God, strike these two fiends dead! They've been practicing on me. I've been Steinached! My life is ruined."

The body threw itself on a convenient couch where it writhed and twisted, moaned and screamed, bit its own flesh and tore its hair in the most beautiful hysterical attack a doctor could possibly wish to study.

"What can we do with the damned fool!" asked Three Eyes, in a tone of supreme disgust.

"Get a big dose of asafetida," ordered Hicks Jarou, who had recovered from his momentary attack of paralysis, and now spoke with the authority of the physician of long practice. "I'll hold its mouth open; you pour in the asafetida."

But the patient was sitting up, both hands firmly held over its mouth, a malignant gleam in its flashing eyes.

"You let me alone," it said sullenly. "Haven't you done enough without adding insult to injury? Give me my clothes."

I'm going straight out to find a policeman. I'm going to have you both arrested."

"Please listen to reason," began Three Eyes, patiently.

"I won't do it," shrieked the body. "I never have, and I'm not going to begin now. Didn't I tell you that I'm a prima donna?"

"Silence!" commanded Hicks Jarou in a tone that was not to be ignored. "You are a body—my body—I made you—"

"The poor thing!" exclaimed the body, exchanging glances with Three Eyes. "He thinks he's God, doesn't he? How long has he been this way?"

"Never mind him for a moment," replied Three Eyes. "Think about your past! What is the last thing you can recall."

The body thought a moment, then drew in its breath sharply. "Why," it exclaimed, "I heard them saying I was almost gone."

"That's it," he replied gently. "You had been very sick—"

"No, I hadn't been sick at all. I was in an automobile accident."

"Oh, yes, you were badly injured. They said you couldn't live—"

"I didn't live," interrupted the body with sudden conviction, "and I wasn't ready to die."

"And then you were told you could have another chance—"

"Oh," sobbed the body, "I was cruelly misled. "Why didn't they tell me the truth! They knew I was a prima donna."

"That is what you were," said Three Eyes, "but you left that work behind, with your other body. Now why not try something different?"

"I'm a lyric soprano. What sort of a reception would I get—a man dressed up in a woman's clothes!"

"You'd be a whirlwind," replied Three Eyes with conviction. "You'd be just what people of today are looking for."

"I was told I'd be treated like a queen. I was told I'd be seated on a throne. I've been cheated. I won't stand for it. I won't stay."

"For Heaven's sake, go!" Hicks Jarou was the speaker. He spoke with violence. "Go, I tell you!" His strength had returned to him, and for a moment he looked as if he could gladly squeeze the life out of the priceless mechanism upon which he had toiled so patiently for years.

"Do you want me to open the door for It?" asked Three Eyes. "Think a minute, dear Master. Just what have you ordered to go—the body or the soul?"

"Shut your confounded mouth," ordered the overwrought, perplexed and unhappy scientist, who suddenly realized that his command meant the admission of the truth of a doctrine that he had, as yet, no intention of recognizing.

"I'm going," replied the body; "you may bet your sweet life on that."

"How did you happen to come?" asked Three Eyes.

"A mean old astral—Oh, but he shall suffer for this!" The voice was more and more like that of a woman. In fact, it become more feminine every minute, and so did the lines of the face. "It is all clear now," she added. "They played a joke on me! When I go back I'll make it my business to hunt up your former tenant, and then, mark my words, there'll be something doing in purgatory."

With this final threat, the body suddenly fell back into the chair. Three Eyes shook it, but the head dropped to one side and the eyes were set. Three Eyes looked at Hicks Jarou, and a long conversation could not have divulged more. Without exchanging a word, the men returned the body to the incubator. Three Eyes attended to the various regulators, while his master looked on with weary eyes.

Hicks Jarou was completely discouraged. Worse, he felt all at sea. He had lost his bearings. His world had become chaos. He now realized that he was in for a complete revision of his oldest and best loved theories, and it would be like tearing him from his foundations. He foresaw a day when he must publicly accept some theories, regarding spirit and its influence

upon matter, that he had publicly condemned for years as absolutely impossible and unthinkable to the educated mind.

Runjeet Singh realized, sympathized, understood, and never once even looked the "didn't I tell you so?" that, being human, he must have felt.

The next day Hicks Jarou sat at his desk, with several newspaper reporters before him, but instead of being interviewed, he was himself interviewing the reporters, although they did not know that. Royalton had given a magnificent entertainment the previous evening, in honor of King Omar-Kouli—and the king had not been present. Hicks Jarou was learning what had been said about his absence.

"The fact is," said Hicks Jarou, quite confidentially, "King Omar-Kouli was called away most unexpectedly—"

"You don't mean to say the king has gone! Already!"

"Unfortunately, yes. The matter was very urgent—"

"At least he might have allowed his friends to go to the station with him."

"He used my airplane. He was worried. There is some sort of uprising among his people. It may be that they do not like the idea of a foreign queen. Anyhow he is gone."

"Won't he return?"

"I hope so. Of course that will depend upon how serious the trouble is, how quickly the uprising can be checked."

"Also," added the reporters, chuckling, "how strong is the attraction left back here in Royalton?"

"Exactly," replied Hicks Jarou, drily, as he bowed his visitors out. "Now," he said when alone with Runjeet Singh, "we've got to get that body on the operating table and loosen up that vasoligature—"

"Do you still think the vasoligature had anything to do with this manifestation?" asked Runjeet.

"You surely cannot have forgotten," replied Hicks Jarou, "that the interstitial gland establishes psycho-physical balance, and determines the masculine or feminine characteristics of

the individual. Now, if I'm finally forced to admit that there's something in your belief in disembodied life, why is it not reasonable to suppose that our work on the interstitial served to attract a female entity to this body?"

"That sounds reasonable," agreed Runjeet Singh.

"Well, then, let's undo all that we did last evening."

"All right. We certainly don't want another female prancing that body all over the house."

A half hour on the operating table served to restore the manufactured body to its former condition. It was then deposited in the incubator, and the two men retired to Hicks Jarou's study where they could give their best thoughts to the social exigencies that were soon to confront them.

Jarou told of his interview with the reporters, and added that he'd written a notice of the king's sudden departure and sent it to Franklin Potter with instructions to play it up well in *The Royalton Star*.

"But the airplane?" asked Runjeet Singh; "isn't it in its hangar?"

"No, the pilot took it away before daybreak. I think every emergency of that nature has been prepared for; now we have the more serious problem of what is to become of the body."

"You can always bury it, you know."

"Destroy the work of a lifetime! Are you crazy?"

"Then what did you mean by 'what is to become of the body?' "

"If, as you think, it is animated by independent entities, how are we to govern it?"

"We can't—not entirely. No man governs the life of his own child, except to a limited extent. You've got to do as the parent does—just hope for the best."

"But the new race!" moaned Hicks Jarou. "Do you forget my dreams of a new race?"

"Can't you be satisfied with this wonderful thing you have already accomplished? Should the body you have manufactured become a father—"

"If, as you say, it could not do so without being governed by an entity that I know nothing about—Oh, can't you see that my work remains a mere machine?"

"A very wonderful machine."

"But that is not enough! It is not enough! If there is something greater than my handiwork, and I cannot capture it, then what is my work worth? My life would be wasted—worse than wasted, I can not have it so. I will not agree with you. I'll cling to the idea that resulted in—what was that?"

A sound of pounding—a muffled bang, bang, could be heard overhead.

"The incubator," gasped Runjeet Singh, and both men raced to the room they had so recently left.

"The gods be praised," said Runjeet Singh, devoutly, "the body has another tenant!"

As they entered the room, they saw at a glance that the incubator was nearly wrecked at the hands of the body, which was making desperate attempts to free itself from imprisonment.

"Geewhillikens!" exclaimed a manly voice, as the body stepped from the incubator without assistance, "what a stiff old carcass this is!" and he vigorously worked arms and legs in an effort to make them limber.

"The former inmate pronounced it well made," Runjeet Singh urged ingratiatingly.

"I know he did—but it weighs on me like lead! And how the old lady did hate it!" The body laughed at the mirth-provoking memory.

"Oh, you saw her?" Runjeet asked politely.

"Yes. She has a rotten temper. As it happens, I had known her before we both checked out. Tried to make us believe she was twenty years younger than she really was. We knew she wouldn't stay long in this body—but just a little joke we played

on her—wanted to get her reaction, you know. Well, we got it, all right, all right,” and the body convulsed itself in a prolonged fit of hearty laughter.

“I’d like to suggest,” said Runjeet Singh, “that if you have not taken possession of this body with the intention of remaining—”

“Don’t worry, old Scarecrow. I’ll stay if I like it, and if I don’t I’ll go. What do you know about that, darling boy,” turning to Jarou, “and what do you think you can do about it?”

Hicks Jarou’s face was stern, but he said not a word. He couldn’t have spoken at that moment, had he tried, and he would not if he could. His mind had received this last bewildering shock like a horse that has been whipped nearly to death. Runjeet Singh, being psychic, was more adjustable.

“Well,” continued the body, “I suppose I had better get used to this stiff old shell as soon as possible.” And he moved about the room with some of the ludicrous caution of a very tipsy man. “Isn’t this the limit! It actually makes me seasick.”

“You are doing nicely,” replied Runjeet Singh, who wished to encourage him. “Just keep trying. Don’t hold your legs quite so far apart. There! That’s better. I suppose,” he added, “that you are a suicide?”

“Sure thing!” replied the body. “Otherwise I shouldn’t be here. You know I have to hang around this old planet until the years originally called for in my horoscope have been lived out.”

“I imagined that might be the case,” said Runjeet Singh. “If I hadn’t believed that a suicide can’t get far away from his birthplace, I’d have killed myself years ago!”

“What for?” asked the new king, curious to learn why anyone else would be foolish enough to evacuate his earthly envelope. Stopping in his wobbly race about the room he faced Runjeet Singh for reply.

“Can you imagine, in this age, what life is to a man with three eyes?”

"Better endure it," advised the body. "Had I liked what I let myself in for when I committed suicide, do you think I'd again be trying for earth life in this old carcass? Lord! I'd forgotten how heavy a body is."

"May I ask why and how you committed suicide?"

"Sure. The girl I fancied married another man, and I drowned myself."

"How many years have you yet to spend on earth?"

"Ten years and two months. This time I'm going to make good. Say, the other fellow told me I was to be king; how about it?"

"That's right, isn't it?" And Runjeet Singh turned to Hicks Jarou for confirmation.

Wearily and without enthusiasm, Hicks Jarou replied that he supposed the body was still that of a king.

"Gee, but that king racket is a bully idea! And believe me, I'll play the part to the queen's taste." The body again started its uncertain walk, but it was more ludicrous than before, because this effort was intended to illustrate the dignified manner the new occupant would assume when he was introduced as king.

"My friend," with an exaggerated bow, he stopped before Runjeet Singh, "my friend, when I was upon this earth before, I was an idolized matinee hero. H-m-m! Get that? A hero and then a matinee idol! Appreciate that?—now I'm a king. Some combination! Believe me, darling boy, some combination! Say, old top—" and he faced the grey-faced scientist, "can you see the lady refusing my hand—yes—no? Not on your life, she won't. I never yet saw a skirt with strength of mind sufficient to do that. I'm a regular little lady killer! Now, when may I see my queen!"

"He will have to spend some days in retirement," said Hicks Jarou to Runjeet Singh, quite as impersonally as if the body still reposed, inanimate, in the incubator.

"Why will I?" demanded the new king. "I have no desire to spend any time at all in retirement."

"You have much to learn," exclaimed Runjeet Singh.

"I didn't come here to study. I was told I should have the time of my life, and I am here to have it. I want to see what's—her—name—the girl I'm supposed to marry; although I think I shall prefer the gay widow."

"The gay widow!" Hicks Jarou turned an inquiring eye toward Runjeet Singh. "Of whom is he speaking?"

"He means Mrs. Somers, I presume."

"He seems to have completely forgotten names," said Hicks Jarou. "Some memory cell has broken down. Let's get him on the operating table and see if we can locate it."

"Poppycock!" jeered the king; "I haven't been told their names, that's the only trouble. I haven't forgotten anything. You let my memory cells alone."

"The pituitary gland," murmured Hicks Jarou, nodding his head as if the solution to his problem had just occurred to him. "Strange that I neglected what I meant to do to that."

"And you let my glands alone, also," thundered the body. "Don't you know that possession is nine points in the law? I'll have you understand that while I stay in this body it's mine, and there'll be no monkeying with it without my consent." He spoke as one having authority, and it became evident even to Jarou, that great tact would be required in his management.

"If we work together," said Runjeet Singh, pacifically, "we ought to be of great value to the scientific world."

"Scientific nothing! I'm here to have a bully good time. Let's get busy. I want to get going."

"Surely you can understand," continued Runjeet Singh, "that you must become conversant with all your successor knew—all he said and did—before you can enter into the social life of Royalton."

"That sounds reasonable. Well, suppose you begin the posting process. It won't take me long to get the hang of things."

"To begin," said Runjeet Singh, "the newspapers are about to tell the world that you left for Tyrsanghee last evening. There has been an uprising among your people—"

"How soon am I expected back?"

"You couldn't get there and back in less than a month."

"I won't stand for that. I'm here now. You tell the newspapers I hadn't gone far before I received a radio assuring me that my people had straightened themselves out without my assistance."

"I suppose that might be done," said Runjeet Singh to Hicks Jarou.

"Perhaps," replied the scientist, who looked as if he no longer cared what was done, "but I don't see that it is necessary."

"Of course it is necessary," interrupted the impatient king, "and equally of course, it can be done. Get busy. Do it. The sooner the better. Then you can say the excitement and anxiety were too much for me. I can pretend to be sick for a few days while I'm getting on to the ropes."

"Not a bad idea," conceded Runjeet Singh.

"A damned good idea, I'd call it," exclaimed the king. "I'm full up with bully ideas. You'll find I'm a live wire—very different from the solemn old duck who got here first."

"Heaven help us!" groaned Hicks Jarou; he'll never be accepted as King Omar-Kouli."

"Why not tell the truth about me?" suggested the king. "I'm not ashamed of my record—before I committed suicide."

"What do you mean—tell the truth about you!" demanded Hicks Jarou.

"Why, just say that the other fellow decamped and I took his place. And we'll tell them exactly—"

"We'll do nothing of the sort," interrupted Hicks Jarou.

"What's to hinder me from telling what I please?"

"No one would believe your story," replied Hicks Jarou, contemptuously.

"Don't be too sure. I'm mighty convincing when I get started. Believe me, I'd make their eyes bulge. I'd startle them right out of the comfy old rut where they've been napping; but they'd like me!—you may take it from me, they are bound to like me."

"They'd call you insane. They'd shut you up in an asylum."

"For telling the truth! I guess not."

"Many men have died for truth," said Hicks Jarou.

"That's a fact," mused the king, "and they're still doing it."

"You don't want to be imprisoned," urged Runjeet Singh, "nor do you want to leave the body until you've had the experience you came back here to get."

"No," admitted the king, "I'm crazy about your king stunt. Nor do I want to lose out with Miss What's-her-name, the heroine. That wouldn't suit me at all if, as I understand, the cash goes with her. We'll have to cook up some other plan. Say, Runny, why not give me a lesson, now? Hicksey, we can get along all right without you. Why not go rest your face? You look all in. Trot along to your room, old top."

Hicks Jarou hesitated—he looked mutinous but decided that he really was not helping matters much by remaining, and that more was to be gained by getting away by himself where he could study this new problem, and decide how best to manage his unruly creation.

As soon as they were alone, the king sidled up to Runjeet Singh, and gave him a playful jab in his stomach with an elbow having a delivery like the hind leg of a fractious mule.

"Now, Runny," he said jovially, "tell me about the widow."

"The widow?" repeated Runjeet Singh, in amazement; "don't you mean your future queen?"

"No, the widow; she's the one that interests me. She's jolly, I take it."

"You are not to be interested in anyone but Miss Willis," warned Runjeet Singh.

"Why not? The widow isn't too old to start a new race, is she?"

"Beatrice Willis is as near a perfect type of womanhood, physically,—yes in every way, as one can find. She is of the type to make a wonderful mother."

"But man alive, can't a king have a playmate as well as a wife?"

"Miss Willis would never permit that."

"She wouldn't know about it. I know how to be discreet."

"Hicks Jarou would not permit it. There'll never be any discourtesy shown Miss Willis while he lives."

"Yet he would not marry her himself?"

"He is a scientist. Scientific research is all he cares for."

"He is a fool. Say, Runny, where's my purse? Is old Hicksey pretty liberal?"

"Your predecessor thought it more dignified to let his servants pay his bills."

"I'm not that kind of monarch. I'll want a lot of money, and I don't want any retainers—except of course on state occasions. I do not intend to be spied upon, or led about like a child. Democratic. That's the idea. I'm a democratic monarch."

"But don't you see you can't be too different from your predecessor!"

"Many sided. That's another good word. Dual character. I'll make use of that." He spread his fingers and studied them curiously. "A very good hand for the purpose," he said. "I'll prove that my hand shows me to be pliability personified. Yesterday, they saw one phase of my nature; today they see another. Tomorrow is to be looked forward to with curiosity and expectation. Get it?" He slapped his thigh and chuckled. "I'll tell the cock-eyed world that's one peach of a plan," he exclaimed. "It allows for every contingency. And now I'll go to bed, but not in that damned incubator! I want to get between the sheets of a real bed."

He insisted that Runjeet Singh give him a massage, or else send for an osteopath.

"I can attend to you," replied Runjeet Singh.

"Put on plenty of hot oil," he instructed, "and manipulate the joints as if your life depended upon your getting them to work without friction. I don't want to go about like a jumping jack."

Finally Runjeet Singh left him, and he turned the key in his door. He did it promptly, and so vigorously that his keeper couldn't help hearing him. "Good night, valet," he called gaily through the key hole. Runjeet Singh grinned. "If you've got a pass key don't you dare use it."

Hicks Jarou and Runjeet Singh went to work in the laboratory. They meant to check up their findings on the glands, and they expected to work all night. They were deeply interested. Even had they not been so busy, however, they might not have heard the king unlock his door and glide softly down the staircase and out into the yard. It hadn't occurred to them that he would do a thing like that.

The king had succeeded in learning the name and address of the "gay widow," and he saw no reason why he should not call upon her. It was late, but if she had gone to the theater or to a party—in that event he might be lucky enough to see her for a few moments before she retired. He ran across a news-boy who escorted him to her door. The boy did not recognize him, and had no idea of the great honor conferred upon him. He was dismissed when they reached her house.

As the king had hoped, Mrs. Somers was just returning from the theater. She left her car and ascended the steps of her home. The king was comfortably seated on one of the porch chairs, and the light shone full upon him.

"For the love of Mike!" she exclaimed; "how came you here!"

"Perhaps the heart of King Omar-Kouli had something to do with it," he replied in his courtliest manner.

"But why are you here—at this time of night!" It is safe to say that she had never been more astonished in her life—and if for the moment she failed in politeness and hospitality, surely she had sufficient excuse.

"Why am I here? Because there is no place where I had rather be. Aren't you going to ask me in and give me a cup of tea?"

"Of course; but tell me, how does it happen that you are not on your way to Tyrsanghee—as the papers said?"

"The editors didn't know what they were talking about. Fact is, I ran away and my host didn't want it known—"

"Doesn't Hicks Jarou know where you are?"

"You bet he doesn't. You see, I wanted to find out a few things for myself. So I ran away—and here I am. Now do be good and say you're tickled stiff to see me."

"Tickled stiff! what an expression—from you."

"Does tickled pink suit you better? I love your slang, and I mean to introduce it into my own country. But I may not always get it right. Don't hesitate to correct me when I'm wrong."

Mrs. Somers giggled. "Can't Hicks Jarou help you with your slang?" she asked wickedly.

"Hicks Jarou! Do you know I'm getting fed up on that old cockalorum."

"Fed up?"

"He thinks he knows everything. Haven't you noticed it? And the fact is, he doesn't know anything that is really worth knowing."

"He is considered a very great scientist," replied Mrs. Somers, coldly, "and he is your host."

"He gets on my nerves."

"Royalton is very proud of Hicks Jarou."

"Alle samee, girlie, Hicksy isn't quite sane."

"Neither are you," thought Mrs. Somers, who was getting rather nervous. She realized that there was something very

wrong with the king, and she was trying to think how best to meet the situation. He had risen and was going towards her door. She could not keep him sitting on her porch any longer, yet she dreaded to invite him into the house. She was frightened. She decided that she must keep him at her home until someone came to take him away—and if she did not go into the house she could not telephone Hicks Jarou where the king might be found.

"Hicks Jarou not quite sane?" she repeated vaguely. "Oh come now, you're joking. Of course he is sane."

"He is not quite sane, and I can prove it—but not out here. I am hoping you will invite me in."

"I do invite you in," she opened the door and led the way to her reception room.

"Now make yourself comfy," she said, "while I see about tea."

"Tea!" he repeated reproachfully; "is that the best you can do for me?"

"What would you like?"

"Champagne! Quarts and quarts of champagne. It is so long since I've had any."

"It is rather late—but just wait while I telephone the butler. He may be able to get some for you."

"Good! Here's hoping that my present palate has been properly educated."

Mrs. Somers telephoned Hicks Jarou and agreed to keep the king interested until he could arrive; then she hastened back to the room where she had left him sprawled in an easy chair. She found him dancing. His arms and legs moved like those of a jumping jack, and his serious countenance proved him to be quite oblivious of anything except the task at hand.

"Oh, here you are," he said brightly, as she returned. "I was making good use of my time—as you saw. My joints work as if they needed sand-papering, but I'll get them trained in time."

"I thought you said you didn't dance—that you hired slaves to do your dancing for you."

"Did I say that?"

"You most certainly did."

"Well it wasn't a bad excuse, was it? Can't you see I'm in need of practice?"

"Oh, that's it? I'm beginning to understand. You're a many sided gentleman, I take it."

"Many sided is right. You wouldn't believe, to see me now, that I was once a matinee idol."

"A matinee idol! You don't mean it." Mrs. Somers had decided that the only way to manage him was to humor him—and keep him talking.

"Yes; but that was years ago — before I killed myself."

"Before you wha-a-at?"

"Killed myself. I was jilted once upon a time and killed myself. Why look so astonished? I wasn't the first young man who did that. I can't remember just what year that was—and I don't know where I was buried, but believe me that old body of mine was a darned sight easier to move about than this one is. It wasn't as good looking, though; I must admit that. I'm going to make a mighty fine appearance when I've learned how to navigate. But say, girlie, you're some looker yourself."

"It has taken you a long time to discover it," replied Mrs. Somers, making a great effort to act at ease. She was really frightened now. It was her first experience with a mad-man. Would that old Jarou never come?

"No, really, not so long. You don't know it, but I've only just arrived. However, I had heard about you and that other girl—what's her name? You know, the girl I'm supposed to marry?"

"Are you by any chance speaking of Beatrice Willis?"

"Beatrice Willis! Yes, that's the name; but I'm for you, fair lady, first, last, and all the time. If I have anything to say about it, you'll be Queen of Tyrsanghee."

"You overwhelm me!"

"Then you consent?"

"Oh, you must give me time to think it over. Stand back; stand back! Don't come any closer please; we're not engaged yet."

"That champagne is a long time coming, seems to me."

"The service isn't very good at this time of night. By the way, you were speaking of Hicks Jarou. Tell me why you talk against your host."

"Because I thought you ought to know that he is insane."

"What makes you think he is?"

"Oh, I learned a lot about him before I moved in."

"Moved in?"

"I forget. You wouldn't understand about that."

"Perhaps not," agreed Mrs. Somers. "Tell me why you think Mr. Jarou is not sane."

"Well, for one reason, you can't convince him that the human body is not a husk."

"Do you want him to think that?"

"Why not? It's the truth."

"Oh, come now; you don't think so yourself."

"I know what I'm talking about. The real person lives in the body—moves it about—but does not depend upon it. I told Hicksey that—and he just laughed."

"And so you two good friends sometimes disagree just a little! How very interesting. I didn't know there was anyone in the world who dared disagree with Hicks Jarou."

"There wasn't until I came."

"How does he take it?"

"Philosophically—as he would. He says he likes to hear me express thoughts that go to prove that my brain is functioning independently and normally."

"What a queer thing to say."

"Isn't it?"

"How does he dare say a thing like that to a king?" Mrs. Somers felt that she was getting to the end of her conversational resources. Would Hicks Jarou never come?"

"How does he dare? Oh, he thinks he owns me. But he will soon learn his mistake. He says it pleases him when I say things that no one could possibly accuse him of suggesting. He then asks that three-eyed slave of his to notice that my brain has taken up independent action, which he claims is the final proof of a great biological fact. Wouldn't that make you tired!"

"Tired? Yes, I am rather tired," replied Mrs. Somers vaguely, and the king realized that she had not been paying much attention to what he had been saying.

"All right, I'll toddle along," he said cheerfully, and arose from his chair with difficulty. "Confound this rusty old frame," he added petulantly. "One would think they might have kept it properly oiled if they expected anyone to drag it about!"

"Don't go yet," pleaded Mrs. Somers, gently pushing him back into the chair; "I like to hear you talk. You are very interesting."

"Really?" exclaimed the king, brightening at once. "I'm glad you've found it out. I'm a humdinger when I get started, but I need time to—what's that?"

"I'm coming right in, Mrs. Somers," said a voice at the door. "Where is he?" Then catching sight of the king, "Oh, there you are, my friend. Now you'd better come home with me." He turned to Mrs. Somers again: "Has he given you much trouble?" He is having a bad attack of flu—it started in with delirium—but he seemed better this evening. We thought we had him comfortably tucked in for the night."

Hicks Jarou thanked her for her assistance, and the king realized that she had set a trap for him; that she had simply been allowing him to talk until his jailer arrived. It was a chastened king who seated himself in the limousine beside his captor. But he had no intention of acting as if he felt chastened.

"Well," he said, with a cheerful grin, "you win the first bout. She accepted your yarn about the delirium."

"She would have accepted it if I had said you had escaped from a lunatic asylum," replied Hicks Jarou quietly.

"Yep; I think she would. I can see that I must devote some time to intensive preparation. It will be a bore—but I've got to do it. And of course, when I put my mind to it, I can learn the ropes fast enough. I simply had not wished to take the trouble."

CHAPTER XI.

There was excitement in Royalton when it was learned that King Omor-Kouli had not left the city, as had been reported, but was very sick with an attack of flu—and it was whispered about that there were complications that caused Hicks Jarou grave anxiety. The Royalton Star came out with an apology for having stated that the king had left the city, when that was not true. A careless reporter was blamed, and somebody was discharged. That made everything appear much clearer and more easily understood.

Mrs. Somers had a beautiful time telling her friends of her “really frightful experience, don’t you know? Why he actually appeared like a madman—and he said the strangest things! It would have made your blood run cold to hear him. When I think of it, I don’t know how I had the courage and the presence of mind to keep him talking as I did until Hicks Jarou arrived. And I did think that man would never come—never!”

It was almost as exciting as a mystery story. It had happened when the smart set of Royalton needed something new to talk about, and this served the purpose admirably. Everyone hoped that the king was suffering nothing worse than delirium. Loads of flowers were sent to the sick man—but he didn’t know that. He was being punished by being kept in his room. He was warned that if he didn’t stay there he would be locked in the incubator. He had retorted that he’d vacate the damned body at once if that happened, and was then informed that no one would care very much if he did.

“Some one else will take possession, you know,” said Runjeet Singh, calmly; “and there is every chance that we’ll find some one who can play the part much better than you’ll ever be

able to. You don't strike me as a very well-balanced character, and your manners are atrocious. I can't see you taking the part of king with any sort of success."

That nettled the king. "You don't know what I can do," he protested, "when I put my mind to it. Give me a chance."

"You can have a little time in which to prove your value," replied Runjeet Singh, calmly.

Hicks Jarou never took part in these conversations. He couldn't. Such talk sounded too silly. After all that had happened he still believed that mind was a manifestation of the body. Why pretend anything else? But he had to admit that Runjeet Singh did understand better how to manage the body he had made than he did himself.

"As it has turned out," he said to Runjeet Singh, "that escapade was the best thing that could have happened. Now we need not trouble ourselves to invent explanations, either for his absence or for any oddity in his behavior that may be noticed. The pretended illness will take care of all that."

"It has made him more pliable," replied Runjeet Singh, "and it gives us time to train him. He has threatened to leave the body, but I don't believe he'll do it. He really wants to stay."

Hicks Jarou gave him a look that was not hard for Runjeet Singh to interpret, and left the room.

Runjeet Singh shook his head despairingly. "Oh, these hard-boiled scientists," he muttered; "how long it takes to convince them that the sixth sense is more valuable than all the others put together."

Alfred Burton was spending an idle hour with Mrs. Somers on her comfortable porch with its easy chairs that had never been designed for porch use. When she had to decide between comfort and style, she chose comfort every time, and so her home was a popular lounging place, and more especially popular with the men. Alfred was stretched out in the chair he liked best, and he had never looked lazier, or more at his ease, or

more carelessly indifferent to everything in life that ought to interest a young, strong, perfectly healthy man. He had been listening to Mrs. Somers' story of her thrilling experience with King Omar-Kouli, which she had told many times, to many listeners, and which always gained a little in its slightly dangerous episodes with each repetition. It was not difficult to picture the saturnine king, with his cave-man directness of speech, as a positive savage when too delirious to realize what he was saying or doing. It made her feel like a real movie heroine, gave her something like a thrill, and she was enjoying herself greatly.

Alfred did not interrupt her, but listened with much more intentness than she realized. He was quite sure she was keeping something back that she thought would rob the story of some of its dramatic quality. And the truth is that all the time she was picturing her cave-man, she was wondering about the astonishing difference she had noticed in him, on the night in question, from the king they had all known. It was a difference in degree—no, not so much in degree either! The man she had entertained was really not a cave-man; she couldn't believe he had ever been one; he was actually much more like the matinee idol he had claimed to be. She couldn't understand it. Which was the real man? Had the king been posing—trying to act as he thought her friends would expect a king of Tyrsanghee would act? If not—if he were really more society man than he had given them reason to suspect, then why play the savage, and especially when he sought to win a society girl for his wife? If he really came to them directly from Tyrsanghee as they had been led to believe, then where had he acquired certain mannerisms that he had displayed on that memorable evening—and had never before displayed? Mrs. Somers was recalling how gracefully he had assisted her to remove her wrap—how he had refrained from seating himself until she was comfortable—how he had raised her hand to his lips—many trifling incidents where he had carried himself

almost like a gallant of the days when women were treated with politeness—and always he had been easy, natural—acting without thought, as one does when good manners become a habit. And he had done this even when talking about something so astonishing and unbelievable as to raise doubts as to his sanity.

When she had told her story in her own way, polishing the dull places and bolstering up the weak places as seemed necessary to make it properly effective, and had reached a natural breathing place, Alfred aroused himself from his seeming somnolence enough to ask a question and start her off again. These questions sometimes sounded actually insane; but one who had considered it worth while to study this society man—Nathan Hawkins, for instance—would have known that he was engaged in stripping away the brilliant conversation in order to get down to the facts in the case.

“What was that he said about killing himself?”

“He really didn’t mention any particulars—just said in the most casual way imaginable that something had happened years ago before he killed himself—just like that.”

“He probably imagined he was Nathan Hawkins. Nat often speaks of something that happened before he was killed.”

Mrs. Somers was startled. “Alfred Burton,” she exclaimed, “you can’t imagine that King Omar-Kouli is another suicide brought back to life!”

“I don’t really think so—but you never can tell. I never have thought so—but when you repeated what he said I suddenly thought of Nathan. Go on! Didn’t he say something else that we can fit into our picture puzzle?”

“Why, come to think of it, he did say something about his joints being stiff—seems to me he said rusty—anyhow not in good working order.”

“Nathan said his body was very stiff when he first began to use it after his accident. But it would be, naturally. I wonder if that wouldn’t fit the other pieces.”

“Do you suppose the king was killed and buried and dug up?”

"Might have been," replied Alfred, "And that would account for his apparent dependence upon Hicks Jarou."

"He called Mr. Jarou, Hicksey." Mrs. Somers laughed. "That struck me as one of the funniest things he did."

"Called him Hicksey, eh?"

"Yes, and said Hicksey had yet to learn that he didn't own him even though he might fancy he did."

"Did he use the word, own?"

"Yes, I'm quite sure about that. And he spoke as if he and Mr. Jarou had had a quarrel about something—and then he said that he believed Hicksey wasn't quite sane."

"Of course his own temporary insanity might have led him to say that. I've heard that when a person is mentally upset he is apt to go against his very best friends."

Mrs. Somers laughed. "You are a delightful audience," she said—"the best I've had. But you are almost too serious—as if it really mattered what anyone says when delirious!"

"All this may prove a help in giving us a correct estimate of the man. Sometimes one who is delirious will tell the truth like an innocent child."

"Truth!" Mrs. Somers was derisive. "Well, in this case he did not stick to the truth closely enough to be very illuminating. For instance, he tried to make me believe that he preferred me to Beatrice Willis, and said if he had his way I should be Queen of Tyrsangee."

"Um-m-m! That's a word-for-word quotation, I take it?"

"Absolutely. Wasn't he absurd!"

"Not so absurd as either you or Beatrice Willis would be if you contemplated marrying him."

"Alfred, I believe you are jealous! Who is responsible for that state of mind—Beatrice or me? And are you gathering data to drive your rival from the field? Do say yes, Alfred; it would be so thrilling."

"Listen, Evelyn. I believe there is something wrong about that king—something that would make any woman sorry if

she married him—and yet I have no proof to bolster up my suspicions. Have you forgotten the story I told of the man in my logging camp?”

“The crazy man?”

“Yes.”

“What has he to do with King Omar-Kouli?”

“That man was crazy because Hicks Jarou made him so.”

“Nonsense! That’s a dreadful thing to say, Alfred.”

‘I know it is, but I firmly believe that man was crazy because Hicks Jarou made him so—practicing on him—I don’t know just what he did, of course—but I feel confident that it had something to do with hypnotism. I believe Hicks Jarou is a hypnotist. I believe that in some way, this man we know as King Omar-Kouli is under the thumb of Hicks Jarou.’

“Well, I don’t believe anything of the sort. I can’t. Don’t you know that all men like Hicks Jarou who do wonderful things, are sure to make enemies who are glad to believe anything that may be said against them? You believe he brought Percy Southdown back to life, don’t you?”

“Yes. I am obliged to believe that, after listening to Nathan’s story as I have. And yet I don’t forget for a moment that it might have been a case of suspended animation.”

“Even so it was a very wonderful thing to do, wasn’t it?”

“It certainly appears so.”

“And he isn’t hypnotizing Nathan?”

“Nathan would never allow anything of the sort.”

“At one time poor Nathan must have been as much under Mr. Jarou’s influence as any man could be. He could have even made him believe as he made your old Old Plymouth Rock believe—and yet he didn’t.”

“That is true. I wish I didn’t dislike the man so much—and I also wish that I knew exactly why I dislike him at all. But I do, and because I do not trust him I cannot trust his guest—and I do not want anyone I care for to get too friendly with him.”

"That's nice of you—but for Heaven's sake don't let your suspicions run away with you. Now, in spite of all you say, I admire Mr. Jarou very much. I am proud to think he recognized me—so great a scientist as he is. And I am interested in King Omar-Kouli. Of course he isn't American, and he doesn't act exactly as we do, or think as we do, either; but that doesn't mean that he may not be much better worth knowing than any of us. I'm not saying that he is—but I believe we should give him the benefit of the doubt."

"And I had been hoping you would help me get a line on him."

"What had you been hoping I would do?" ,

"Well, for one thing, take him away from the others whenever you can—"

"Lovely!"

"And let me know so I can join you—"

"A regular Buttinsky!"

"We could study him to better advantage if we had him to ourselves—"

"Oh, you don't have to argue that point! I'm perfectly willing to lure the king—and of course if I have to invite you to act as chaperone—but not every time, Mister Man; don't expect me to do that."

"But if I were not with you—and anything happened—"

"What do you imagine could happen?"

"For one thing, you might run away and marry him. You'd be quite equal to that sort of dare-devil folly."

"Thank you, sir! But if I were a queen, you'd not dare to talk to me like that."

"Even if he is a king, his kingdom couldn't possibly be of any importance."

"Because you haven't happened to hear of it? That may be because it hasn't been drawn into any world wars—or got into any money scrapes with the countries you do happen to know about. But don't you suppose there are many kingdoms which

have not become notable—that may be happy and prosperous just the same?”

“Perhaps. But if they are very prosperous the world generally hears about them.”

“Well, we know that Hicks Jarou is a very wealthy man. We do know that, don’t we?”

“Yes, we know that. I heard a banker say he’d cash Hicks Jarou’s check for a million dollars without a moment’s hesitation.”

“And Mr. Jarou said that the king was to be his heir.”

“Men have been known to change their minds—make another will at the last moment.”

“You just won’t be reasonable about it, will you? You have heard Franklin Potter say he was satisfied with the king’s genealogical record—and Franklin has proven himself right more than once.”

“Whatever Potter has said in the king’s favor, he has never seemed to me to be the king’s friend.”

“That may be. The king is his rival. No man can love a rival. Franklin believed he had a good chance to win Beatrice before the king appeared.”

While Alfred and Mrs. Somers were carrying on their amiable controversy, Franklin Potter sat alone in his hotel sitting room. He petulantly threw down *The Royalton Star*, in which he had been reading of the illness of King Omar-Kouli, and the hope held out that he would soon be able to see his friends again. He had written that item himself—at the dictation of Hicks Jarou—and he hated it. He had written the item telling of the king’s hasty departure for Tyrsangee, and then he had written the apology, and also the item telling of the discharge of the careless reporter. No reporter had been discharged. Every item he had written about the king had been dictated by Hicks Jarou. He did not understand the situation—but he believed there was something wrong, and that Beatrice Willis should not be allowed to marry the king.

If only he could get to the bottom of it all! If only he could persuade Beatrice to run away with him! He knew how angry that would make Hicks Jarou—but what could he do about it, once they were married?

“What right have I,” he thought angrily, “to sit here like a bally totem pole and let her be married to a savage—or—to a hypnotized fraud. There’s no telling what the man’s past life has been; but I’m willing to bet all I’m worth that it hasn’t been straight.”

Then he asked himself why he was willing to make such a bet—and crumpled. He did not believe in Omar-Kouli because he was endorsed by Hicks Jarou—yet what about himself? He had been warned against asking Beatrice to marry him—and he had not asked her. Why? Because he was afraid of Hicks Jarou! But now he felt courageous. He had been carefully saving a part of his salary—had quite a nice bank account of which his employer did not know. Suppose he did lose his job? He and Beatrice could get along on what he had until he found something else to do. But could he find anything else? Hicks Jarou had once let him understand how easily he could be discredited—and if he once became angry—as he would—he’d be a dangerous enemy! Oh, how muddled it all was! How he hated himself because of the love of easy living which had always stood between himself and real achievement. He hated himself, but he could not summon the courage to cut himself loose. How he envied Nathan Hawkins, and yet he knew that he would not care to be in Nathan’s place. To earn a bare living—to work all day and every day—to give up all the pleasures of social life—to have calloused hands and broken finger nails—to eat in the servant’s hall—to be ignored by all the dainty ladies who had once made much of him—no, he did not want to take Nathan’s place—much as he envied the man his independence. Nathan was afraid of no man. He was a slave to no man. He stayed with Hicks Jarou because he liked to work for him, but he could go when and where he pleased.

Hicks Jarou would be sorry to lose him, but he would know better than to try to keep him against his better judgment. Yet not so long ago, Nathan had been engaged to be married to Beatrice Willis, and Hicks Jarou had given him information about Southdown—no, Runjeet Singh had done that. Runjeet had helped him expose Lord Percy. Perhaps Hicks Jarou really had not known that he, Franklin, had meant to denounce Lord Percy Southdown. He had asked Runjeet Singh to help him because he had wanted to drive Percy out of town—but because Runjeet Singh had been very ready to help him, he had believed Hicks Jarou wanted it done—yet, if so, why had the man been rescued and made to live again? Why did Hicks Jarou appear to like him so well, now, that he'd work with him like another hired laborer? It was all very puzzling.

Finally Franklin decided to call upon Beatrice. There would be no harm in just sounding her out. If he should happen to find out that she liked him at all—if she gave him any encouragement—certainly her mother had not discouraged him! She had given him to understand that she believed he might win her daughter, and had said it would be much more pleasing to her than to have Beatrice married to a man who would carry her off to a savage island. Anyhow, there would be no harm in letting Beatrice know how he felt. He needn't say anything definite—just yet. But if Beatrice liked him and if she thought she could manage on what he had—for a time—well, why not find out! He was sure he knew how to be discreet.

So Franklin went to call upon Beatrice, and before he had been there five minutes she knew exactly what he had it in mind to say to her—although she flattered him by thinking that he really meant to propose immediate marriage. In less than ten minutes from the time of his arrival, she had frankly confided in him as she would in a dearly loved brother. She had confessed that she was desperately in love with another man, that she was not at all sure how the other man felt about it, but as for herself she was quite willing for that other man

to treat her as his slave if he felt so inclined. There was nothing she would not do to win him. She loved him so much that she just longed to give her life to save him from—well from whatever might endanger the life of a wonderful man. She raved as no one had ever before heard her rave. In fact there was none among her friends who would have believed that she could ever have held herself so cheaply as she professed to do while she talked to Franklin about her infatuation.

Franklin could hardly believe his own ears. In the first place he had never really believed in love. He believed that people liked some people better than some other people—but to be willing to die for a loved one—that was all poppycock. It wasn't done. Beatrice was hysterical. He must help her back to normalcy.

"You really must not talk like that," he said gravely. "You do yourself an injustice."

"I don't see it," she replied, earnestly. "You are old fashioned, Franklin. You don't know anything about the modern girl. Girls of today believe in saying what they think. Now, I see no reason why I should not tell you that I'm in love—clear over my head in love. I'm using the language of love. I'm compelled to use it because I want advice. You are like a brother—and you are a man and ought to know how to help me. Here's my problem. I am not at all sure that the man I love cares anything at all about me. I am sure that he does not love me, and I believe that is because he has not thought of me as a wife. Now how can I make him take notice?"

Beatrice could hardly keep her face straight when she asked this question. It was not because she believed Franklin could help her solve what she called her problem—but because she hoped by taking the matter up so frankly with him, to ward off the proposal she believed he had come there to make.

Franklin was embarrassed. "I think," he said, "that there is only one kind of love that can not be sought like—like merchandise—and that is universal love—"

"That is not what I want," interrupted Beatrice. "It is not what I am feeling either. Universal love doesn't build individual homes with a father and a mother and a family! I want all that—and I don't want to wait forever for it, because it should come while I am young. Of course if you can't help me, I must ask someone else. There must be some man who can tell me how to interest the man with whom I am absolutely infatuated."

"Absolutely infatuated! Beatrice, you don't mean anything of the sort. You are hysterical. What ails you? It isn't at all like you to talk so—so recklessly."

"I suppose any girl becomes reckless when she is forced to experience the pangs of unrequited love. Some girls pine away and die; but I'm not like that. I'd rather put up a good stiff fight. I'm the kind who means to have what they want when they want it—or die trying to get it."

"Beatrice, won't you consider me—"

"Don't!" exclaimed Beatrice, holding up a warning hand; "don't say it. I don't want to hear it. It wouldn't do, Franklin, honestly it wouldn't. We know each other too well. We're too much like brother and sister. Oh, I did hope you would understand without my saying it—but when I marry it will be to some man who just bristles with the unexpected."

"I'm sure you do not know me as I really am. I, too, long for the unexpected—for romance—for a life as different from that I am living—"

"You'll never find it," interrupted Beatrice, with conviction. "You couldn't get out of your little rut if you tried, and you'd never really try. Oh, I know. I've been studying you. You know there was a time when I thought we might be married—"

"Oh, Beatrice, did you?"

"Yes; but I saw it wouldn't do. And then I told you never to come here again—"

"I know, but your mother encouraged me to come."

"You were not calling upon my mother, were you? Then why should you have listened to her and not to me?"

"You were kind to me when I did come, and I hoped—"

"But Franklin, what more could I have done! I couldn't have kicked you out, could I? I want you for a friend—a sort of big brother—but I never could be interested enough in you to marry you."

"Why don't you care for me? I'd try to be anything—to do anything—"

"No, you wouldn't. You couldn't. You are as you are. You are not a free man."

"Not a free man! What do you mean by that?"

"I don't know—but my intuition tells me you are not a free man. I believe that in some way you are under bonds to Hicks Jarou."

"You ought not to object to that. I've heard you say how much you admire him."

"I do admire him because he is a great man. But that does not mean that I'd want a husband who was influenced by him or any other great man. I like men who are absolutely independent. Do you know, I admire Nathan Hawkins a hundred times more than I did when he was calling himself Lord Percy Southdown. He wasn't interesting then—but he is terribly interesting now."

"How do you know? Does he call on you?"

"No, he won't even accept an invitation. I've tried him out in every way I could—but he simply ignores me. He is so brutally independent that he is absolutely fascinating."

Is it to be wondered at that Franklin now felt pretty well convinced that Beatrice had not ceased to be in love with his old rival? Certainly she had done her best to create that impression. "Of course," she added, "you are not to get the idea that King Omar-Kouli is entirely out of the running."

"King Omar-Kouli!" Franklin groaned. "Beatrice, you couldn't do a thing like that, could you?"

"Why not? He bristles with the unexpected—if any man ever did. And if the man I love never does care for me—why, I could marry King Omar-Kouli without feeling that I was doing him an injustice. He doesn't pretend that love will enter into the question, you know."

"For God's sake, forget that man!"

"Not on your life. He is really romantic—"

"Such a union would be damnable!"

"Why how fierce you are!" Beatrice giggled. "I've never seen you like this. I didn't know you could be so much alive."

"Evidently your opinion of me has not been any too flattering," said Franklin resentfully. "I have had a some-what unexpected eye-opener."

"I did not want to hurt your feelings—but you simply would not take a hint. I'd like you for my friend—but if you refuse, then I don't see why you should come here again—even to please mother."

"Shall you say that sort of thing to Omar-Kouli—or to Nathan Hawkins—or to Alfred Burton—or any of the others who would like to marry you? Or am I in a class by myself? I do not believe Omar-Kouli is any more independent of Hicks Jarou than I am—and we know that Nathan Hawkins is merely his hired man."

"Perhaps we'd better say goodbye for the present," replied Beatrice coldly.

"Very well. Allow me to say that I congratulate Alfred Burton," he added, as he took his hat and was opening the door. "I was silly not to have seen, when I first heard your interesting confession, that he was the only man who really fitted your description." Then he made his exit without giving her an opportunity to reply, and she stood where he had left her wondering if he would be spiteful enough to congratulate Alfred also. It had not occurred to her that the conversation might take that turn.

"A jealous man," she said, "is much smaller than a jealous woman. Next time I try to keep a man from making a declaration that he might wish unsaid,—well, next time, I'll be a hundred and twenty years old."

She stood at the window watching him as he went slowly down the street. "I was a lot meaner to him than I needed to be," she thought regretfully, "and I've always believed I could manage such a situation with dignity. He was more dignified than I was—and mother would like to have me marry him. I wonder what Hicks would say if I told him I was in love with Franklin? Would he be jealous? No, not jealous, darn him—he'd just push his horrid king to the front once more."

Franklin left the Willis home believing himself to be the most unhappy man in the world. He was exceedingly sorry for himself, and yet his nature was such that he could get more than a little comfort out of the situation. If he couldn't be great in any other way it was some satisfaction to know that he was greatly abused.

He had cared more for Beatrice than he had ever cared for anyone except himself. She was the only woman he had ever met whom he wanted to marry. And she had refused him. She had made her refusal very explicit. She had even told him of her love for another man, without a thought as to what that meant to him. She had not cared how cruelly she had wrung his heart. But there is no great loss without some small gain! Suppose he were here now on his way home—an engaged man—and facing the prospect of squaring himself with Hicks Jarou and Nathan Hawkins. Both these men had warned him that Beatrice was not for him, and both knew exactly how to make life a burden to him.

Well, he had escaped all that. He was the most unhappy man in the world—but—the situation might be worse.

CHAPTER XII.

King Omar-Kouli had been making a terrible racket, and Runjeet Singh had gone to his room to try to quiet him.

"I've been a prisoner long enough," declared the king, "I have learned all I need to know. I'm ready to go out and enjoy myself."

"Very soon, now," began Runjeet Singh, reassuringly—

"Very soon nothing!" yelled the king. "If I'm not given my liberty at once I mean to kick up a racket that will make the entire police force come a-running."

"Why not carry out a former threat," inquired Runjeet Singh, mildly; "why not leave the body?"

"Leave this body? Nothing doing!" The king had regained his cheerfulness. He had made himself heard.

"But you said you'd leave," urged Runjeet.

"I've changed my mind about that, darling. I've decided to keep possession until I'm ready to leave; and listen, precious! I won't leave one-half minute before I am ready. Now listen some more, Runny!" He took Runjeet by the shoulder and spoke earnestly into his ear. "Don't get the idea, old pet, that you can force me out, because you can't do it."

"Can't we?"

"No, you can't."

"Think we're trying to?"

"Sure of it. You see, I overheard Hicksey telling you he thought he'd try trepanning—"

"That was not because he meant to force you out—"

"Oh, no, because he has not yet acknowledged that I'm in—the poor, old, crazy materialist! You're the one who thinks I can be forced out."

Runjeet grinned quite companionably. "It could be done," he said, "but it wouldn't be wise."

"Of course not," replied the king, "if Hicksey's work is to count for anything. What a queer old cove he is! He knows so much, and yet he knows so little."

"Yes," acknowledged Runjeet, gravely.

"I thought I'd laugh myself into a fit, last evening, when I heard him telling you he thought he might discover a vacant space in my brain cavity—or perhaps that he'd made a mistake in the composition of the brain stuff. Really, you know, this is a very decent body, taken as a whole. Now that I've learned how to use it, I like it immensely."

At this moment Hicks Jarou entered the room, a thoughtful frown on his handsome face. He had not seen his handiwork for two days, and was wondering what new problems it would present, and fully expecting there'd be something not looked for.

"Hello, Hicksey," said the king jovially; "why the furrowed brow? I give you my word that the protoplasm was O.K.—and you can see for yourself that the brain is functioning in a masterly manner. You got the proper reaction, and the expected functioning started in at the time set, and in the manner hoped for. Now why not forget your worries, and let's get down to business. When am I expected to marry Miss Willis?"

"You will probably not be able to win her at all," replied Hicks Jarou, coldly. He turned to Runjeet, ignoring the king except as a bit of mechanism. "Jove!" he exclaimed between set teeth, "I'd give ten years of my life to know just where the trouble lies. If I could just get a clue—"

"I'll give you one," interrupted the king. "It lies with yourself. Why won't you accept the fact that all you've done is to build a human house, for a living soul to function in? That's a wonderful achievement—and no man could do more. We often complimented you while you were putting this body together—"

"We? Of whom are you speaking?"

"Oh, a group of us—all suicides—who wished we hadn't been in such a hurry to shuffle off. I was the first to bespeak

the body—but when it was ready that other fellow beat me to it!”

Hicks Jarou studied the king for a moment with an expression very like that a student gives to a problem in algebra that can't be proven, then he turned again to Runjeet Singh.

“Runjeet,” he said, “I'm almost convinced that the brain matter was changed by magnetic rays from certain planets. We must take up that line of study. Perhaps they caused fermentation—just as heat causes less complicated chemical compounds to ferment—”

“I remember,” interrupted Runjeet Singh, “that Venus was in mid-heaven, at the time—and perhaps we didn't get that bunch of protoplasm properly immune.”

“Cut it out,” thundered the king, “and listen to me. I've stood this damn-fool nonsense long enough. Listen, now. I'm going to step out and have some fun. I'm going into society and you can't prevent it.”

“We'll put him back into the incubator,” said Hicks Jarou, with decision, “and lock him in. Shut off the air, too.”

“And I'll leave the body,” replied the king, calmly “and just hang around until you get tired of the fight. You'll have to decide to give the body another chance, and then I'll step in and set it going. Believe me, Hicksey, no one else shall take possession until I say the word. If you succeed in getting me out before I am ready to go, you'll have to cut this blooming shell into mince meat. Now I ask you, what do you think you'd gain by doing that? Why be so stubborn? In your heart you are already convinced that you didn't make me—that you can only lay claim to the body. Why not be man enough to say so?”

“For the sake of argument, I will admit it,” replied Hicks Jarou. “Very well, then. That body is my property, and I command you to leave it.”

“And I refuse to obey,” was the prompt response.

“Call that playing fair?” asked Runjeet.

"You haven't given me a fair show," retorted the king. "Remember, you can never carry out your plans for Tyrsanghee unless you treat me right, because I will see to it that the body remains vacant. Not only that, but if you become too disagreeable, I promise you that I'll leave this precious mechanism in such shape that it can never house another tenant."

"Now see here," temporized the scientist, "if you are what you say you are, you must know you are traveling under false pretences. You must know that you are not real—"

"I'm as real as you are!" interrupted the king. "What difference does it make that I live in another body than that which I first inhabited? Do you know how many bodies you have carried about?"

"But you are only a temporary tenant—" interrupted Runjeet.

"Nothing to it. Any man is liable to die and leave his body. Why, Hicksey, you may die years before I pull out of this good looking shell."

Jarou could not deny this, having gone thus far in his half-hearted recognition of the theory that an independent entity did inhabit the body. "Well," he said, after a few moments deliberation, "it remains for me to tell our Royalton friends who and what you are."

The king laughed heartily. "Do," he said, "and see what happens. Who will believe you, when I deny what you say? They'll have you up for insanity. Wasn't that what you once said would happen to me, if I told the truth? Royalton isn't ready for such a truth as either you or I could tell. As for me, I'm going to be recognized as the sanest man in the universe from now on. You'll see. You'd better bow to the inevitable, old top."

"Let's get to work," said Hicks Jarou, in an undertone to Runjeet Singh. "I'm ready to take chances. Nothing could be worse than this. Come on!"

"No you don't!" interrupted the king. "You won't work any tricks on me. I'm not going back into that incubator."

You can't put me back. But if you think you can, just try it! I dare you to try it. This body is as heavy as the deuce, but I can manage it well enough, now, to put you both out of the counting."

"After all," said Runjeet Singh pacifically, "why not let him do as he wants to—see what will happen?"

"I am King Omar-Kouli," interrupted the king proudly. "I am every inch a king, too, and I'm handsome." He surveyed himself in the mirror, as he spoke. "Lord, what a leg! What shoulders! And did you ever see a more perfect nose?" He slapped Hicks Jarou familiarly on the shoulder; "old top, you did a fine job when you made this body, and the king-racket is simply corking."

Hicks Jarou advanced with blazing eyes, and the king squared off like a prize fighter. "Keep your hands off," he said "or you'll wish you had. This body is backed up by a force that could tie you two men into a knot in a jiffy. I have been attending to that while you had me locked in this room. Believe me, I'm ready for you. I was prepared to come out without your assistance, when you unlocked the door. See here." He picked up a heavy mahogany table, held it with one hand high above his head, then brought it down before him, breaking it into bits, as one breaks a bundle of dry spaghetti. "Now," he said, quietly, "do you think you'd enjoy monkeying with King Omar-Kouli?"

Both men decided very quickly that they would not care to try to return him to the incubator unless they could catch him off guard, and they also saw the futility of trying any longer to keep him a prisoner in his room. Hicks Jarou could no longer doubt that his creature had taken up an independent existence. Exceedingly independent.

"I learned a lot about electricity," the king informed them, "after I drowned myself—facts that are not known on this earth, although they've long been known on Mars."

"See here," exclaimed Hicks Jarou, "you've got to stop talking as if you'd ever lived outside that body."

"I shall do as I please about that," replied the king, calmly. "I call no man master."

"Don't you think you owe me any consideration?"

"No. What I think is that I'm doing you a mighty important service when I help you prove that this mechanism can be moved about like a naturally born human being. I practiced dancing while you had me shut up in this room, and I did very well—not, of course, as I used to do on the stage when the audience insisted on my repeating until I was worn out—but on the whole my work isn't half bad. Look here," and he waltzed about the room as gracefully as a dancing master. "I shall have a fine time, this evening, at the Mayor's ball."

"Who told you about that?" demanded Hicks Jarou

"These ears hear surprisingly well."

"You have received no invitation to the ball."

"Oh, yes, I have. You accepted for yourself, but regretted that the king would not be able to go. The king is able to go. He will surprise his friends this evening."

"Keep his dress suit—where it is," said Hicks Jarou to Runjeet Singh.

"But bring it to me when it is time to dress for that ball," commanded the king, "or I'll break every bone in your body."

Then he turned to Hicks Jarou: "You talk of consideration due you," he said, sternly, "and propose to treat me like a slave. It can't be done. I am a king. You have said so yourself. You can't go back on that, now. You can't tell the world the part you have played in putting this frame together, because no one will believe you. You have said I am King Omar-Kouli, of Tyrsanghee, and you bet your sweet life that's who I am."

"No man will be recognized as King of Tyrsanghee who does not carry out my wishes. That body was built for a purpose."

"I know all about that. I'm not quarreling with your purpose."

"The Queen of Tyrsanghee must be of a type capable of bearing perfect children,"

"I understand, agree, and applaud."

"You could not win her—"

"Oh, yes, I can. I learned her name—along with other things. Now I don't say I won't marry Beatrice Willis, but I do say she will have to be a lot more attractive than Evelyn Somers if she expects to win me. I'll decide that after I've seen her."

"After you've seen her!" Hicks Jarou groaned. "You've been together almost constantly for weeks—"

"I know. I've thought that all out, too. People will wonder at the mistakes I may make. Well, I shall say to them that I have not been myself since I came here, until since I recovered from my late very serious illness, because I was wandering around in a state of delirium—no, I guess we'd better call it a case of loss of identity. That's quite common, you know. They'll all understand that. You'd better study up on aphasia, and make some of the explanations yourself. They'll sound better coming from you."

Hicks Jarou had to acknowledge the truth of this,—it would sound better coming from him. He was forced to admit that the king had hit on an easy way out of what had appeared to be an insurmountable difficulty. It was not easy for him to take orders from this, his handiwork, but he bravely took up this new problem. Since the king was determined to play his part, and there was no way to be rid of him, the wisest course was to help him play it gracefully. And after all, he was appearing a much more attractive personality than he had at first. The wonderful dream of a new race might still be indulged in.

There was a sensation when Hicks Jarou entered the ball room, that evening, accompanied by King Omar-Kouli, as handsome as ever, evidently in the pink of condition, far more vivacious than Royalton had ever seen him, and much more approachable. He appeared very much like an ordinary American out for a good time. Without waiting one moment

longer than good form demanded, he made his way to Mrs. Somers. "Won't you dance?" he asked, and without awaiting her consent he placed his arm about her and whirled her out on the floor.

It will be remembered that he had not danced at the balls to which he had been invited. He had said very distinctly that he had never learned to dance—that he had slaves to do his dancing for him—yet here he was, by far the best dancer in the room. He had said—and most disagreeably—that he did not approve of dancing, except by girls hired to entertain royalty—that he could not understand how cultivated people could take part in a performance that must be lowering to the morality of those who participated, and offensive to those who disliked to be pawed over. Yet his face was now alive with enjoyment, and he was holding Mrs. Somers much more closely than was necessary. Certainly that did not show marked dislike to close contact with common people.

Another juicy morsel for those who enjoyed gossip, concerned the king's failure to give Beatrice the first dance. What did that mean?

The consensus of opinion had been that Beatrice was the king's preference! He had shown her every attention. He had called upon her the very evening before his illness—on that day when he was supposed to have returned to Tyrsanghee. Had she refused to become his queen, and thereby angered him? Was that his method of reprisal?

"Absurd," sniffed some of the cynics. "No girl would refuse the hand of a king."

But the king was furnishing them another sensation. He and Mrs. Somers had stopped dancing. They happened to be standing very near the little group of gossipers, all of whom saw him fix his eyes on Beatrice.

"Who is that stunning girl?" he asked Mrs. Somers, "I wish to be introduced."

There was an exchange of glances which meant "now what do you know about that! He asks to be introduced."

"I will introduce you with pleasure," replied Mrs. Somers, maliciously, and they moved towards the place where Beatrice stood beside her mother's chair, in conversation with Hicks Jarou.

Mrs. Somers said, quite naturally, "Beatrice, King Omar-Kouli wishes to know you. Your majesty, allow me to present Miss Willis." She performed the introduction as casually and innocently as if the two had never met before. It was a delicious moment.

"Beatrice Willis!" exclaimed the king, breaking into the merriest peal of laughter. "So that's who you are! And I never guessed it."

"Has King Omar-Kouli quite recovered?" inquired Beatrice pleasantly.

"I'm all right now. Jarou told you, didn't he, that I was not myself for a long time?"

"He did say something of the sort. We were glad to know that."

"Glad to know what, please? I don't quite understand."

"Glad to know that King Omar-Kouli was not as disagreeable as he appeared."

"Oh, I begin to see light! You didn't like me?"

"Not particularly," replied Beatrice quite archly. "But of course you are not to be judged by past behavior,—if what your friends say of your condition is true."

"Please believe that it is true. Why, I could never have forgotten you, if I'd been in my right mind! Believe me, it won't happen again. Won't you dance?"

"I think not, thank you—not this time."

"All right. Some other time, then. You can't side-step me forever. Come on, Evelyn, let's take another turn."

Evelyn! He called her Evelyn. And he was dancing with her again—paying no attention to Royalton's many pretty girls!

But the gossips had hardly got their critical faculties to work before it appeared that the king's seeming indifference was not to last long. He danced steadily until nearly morning, and he did not miss any of the most attractive girls. He had a very jolly time, and so did they. In spite of the fact that he could not recall ever having met any of them, they were all flattered. They accepted his excuses at their face value. He had been ill—no one realized how ill—a form of aphasia—Hicks Jarou would tell them about it. He was well, now—quite himself again, and they could all bet their sweet lives that he meant to have a hum-dinger of a good time. They admitted that his manner was somewhat unrestrained—not quite desirable for a king—but on the whole they liked him better this way. And after all, why should a king be particularly dignified! That was one of the old-fashioned notions that must be discarded. Dignity was bunk. There wasn't the remotest reason why a king should not be a law unto himself—just as modern youth meant to be. Hurrah for a good time.

Beatrice and her mother went home early. Mrs. Willis was worried. She had been tactfully but convincingly informed by Hicks Jarou that he expected her to use every influence to bring about a marriage between her daughter and his protege. There had been something more than a hint of future unhappiness for the house of Willis, in case he was disappointed. Mrs. Willis knew, now, how she was expected to pay the loan he had made her. She recalled what he had said, "why not enjoy your home to the last minute," and again she shuddered when she thought of the peculiar emphasis he had placed on the last four words.

"Mr. Jarou was not pleased," she said to Beatrice, "because you refused to dance with the king."

"Mr. Jarou was not dancing with anyone," Beatrice retorted. "Had he been polite enough to ask me to dance, I would then not have refused his silly king."

"But he has never danced."

"Is that any reason why he never should? He pretends to like me—to be my best friend—then why shouldn't he do as I want him to once in a blue moon!"

"But Beatrice, you forget his age! He is too old—"

"He isn't old at all," interrupted the girl, "except his lovely white hair, and that makes him look younger. He can do anything that any man in the younger set is doing, and a thousand things that none of them could do at all."

"That is true—but he doesn't care to dance."

"If he wanted to please me he would learn to dance. He could do it without any difficulty. I believe he could dance better than any of us without taking a lesson."

"You talk like a child, Beatrice. What ails you! You are unreasonable. Think of a grave scientist, old enough to be your father, dancing to please you! You are absurd. And what, may I ask, are you doing to please him?"

"He isn't giving me much of an opportunity to do anything. He never talks to me—as if I were grown up—yet I'm sure he likes me better than anyone else in Royalton."

"He has told me how you can please him."

"By being friendly with the king, I suppose," interrupted Beatrice, petulantly. "He's told me that, too, and I did try while the king was a stranger. But he's getting along very well without me, now."

"Hicks Jarou is not interested in the relations of Omar-Kouli with anyone but you, Beatrice," said Mrs. Willis, gravely. "He wishes you to marry the king."

"He does!" Beatrice looked astonished, then mutinous. "Did he tell you that—in so many words—or did you infer it?"

"He told me, very plainly, that he wishes you to marry Omar-Kouli."

"Well, you can tell Mr. Hicks Jarou for me that I'll never do anything of the sort. I'll tell him so, too. Oh, just let me have one good interview with that man! The idea of his thinking he can pick out a husband for me. I'll soon let him

know that there are a few of us—one at least—who won't run when he whistles!"

"Beatrice! Control yourself, dear child. Why, what a temper you have developed! I never saw you like this before."

"I never had any reason to be," stormed Beatrice. "That man is enough to try the patience of a saint. Why should he be so anxious to marry me to Omar-Kouli, I'd like to know. It's an insult—his daring to suggest such a thing."

"I don't know about that. You and the king were together a great deal, before the king's illness. Mr. Jarou may think you should not trifle with the affections of—of a king—and especially a—a foreigner—who might not take it like an American—"

"I understand what you're trying to say," interrupted Beatrice, "and there's nothing in it. I did not flirt with the king. I did my best to help entertain him, while he was strange here, and when he proposed I refused him—as kindly as I could, of course—and no one can say I did not have a right to refuse him."

"I see," murmured Mrs. Willis, thoughtfully. "You refused him. That accounts for his odd behavior this evening."

"You mean his inability to recognize me?" Beatrice giggled. "That was a rather neat way to retaliate. No other man ever thought of that. But I met him on his own ground. He certainly *is* unique—and I had fun studying him—but as for marrying him—no thank you!"

Mrs. Willis was very quiet. Her eyes wore a haunted look, she had become as pale as death, and her lips trembled. An involuntary groan escaped from her closely pressed lips.

"What is it mother!" exclaimed Beatrice, anxiously. "Are you ill?"

"Oh, my little girl," moaned the mother—"I've got to tell you—I'd rather die than say it—but I've got to—I've got to! First let me ask you, dear—if you knew that I, your mother, and Hicks Jarou whom you call friend—if you knew that we both wished you to marry the king—couldn't you do it?"

"Evidently," replied Beatrice, slowly, "there's something to this that I don't understand—something that I should be told. Come across, mother! I must know what's behind that question before I answer it."

And then, for the first time, Mrs. Willis told her daughter of her indebtedness to Hicks Jarou. "You remember," she said, as if by way of excuse, "you must recall that I told you how we were placed."

"Why, yes," replied Beatrice, "but I suppose it did not make as much of an impression as it should. I was terribly worried for a few days—but you didn't say anything more about it, and things went on as usual—"

"Yes, as usual. Hicks Jarou made that possible—and I didn't want to worry you—I kept hoping something would happen—"

"Should I have guessed?" asked Beatrice. "I didn't know—no one has ever talked to me about business—how could I have guessed! And what could I have done!"

"Nothing, dear, that you can't do now."

"Hicks Jarou paid the mortgage on this place—has he done more than that?"

"Yes," The reply came in an agonized whisper.

"How much more?"

"Oh, I don't know, exactly!"

"You don't know? Haven't you signed notes, or given mortgages, or — or anything like that?"

"No, he has never said one word about notes or mortgages—or — or anything—and I have never asked for help—not since that first time. There has been no talk of money, or — or obligation — until tonight—"

"But you expected to pay sometime?"

"Yes. Oh, I can't tell you how I have worried about it! But I thought that, at the worst, he'd probably take over the home—"

"For the mortgage?"

"No, to cover what he has advanced. You see, he has paid the taxes, and every little while he has sent me a check—"

"Without being asked?"

"Yes. I suppose he realized that we'd have to live, and possibly he planned to advance the value of this property—buy it in that way, and let us live here until you married. I—I had hoped that—that we shouldn't need to take more than the value of the place—"

"But we have?"

"I'm afraid so—but I'm not quite sure. I asked for an accounting—and—he has told me how he is to be paid. Oh, Beatrice, he was so decided about it! It was more like a threat than—than anything—and yet his offer was generous. The debt will be wiped out—forgotten—this home will be mine—you will have everything that money can buy—if you marry King Omar-Kouli."

"So that's the way it stands! It would be interesting to know the exact sum involved. I must ask Mr. Hicks Jarou, eminent biologist, for a statement. I'd like to know my value, as merchandise. I want to know the amount my mother is willing to sell me for—the amount the man who posed as my best friend is willing to pay—for a wife for King Omar-Kouli."

Beatrice pressed her hands over her mouth, as if to press back the wild, rebellious words that clamored for expression. She gave her mother one long, reproachful, heart-broken look, then turned suddenly, rushed to her own room and locked herself in. Her fight was on — not for freedom, but for strength to bear the inevitable.

CHAPTER XIII

Before his illness, King Omar-Kouli had been considered a good deal of a barbarian—which of course was not surprising when one remembers that his kingdom was an island in the South Seas. Allowance had to be made for speech and mannerisms at times almost offensive to Royalton's smart set—and allowance was made most generously, which was perfectly right and proper, also easy to accomplish, as any one would understand, who could realize the advantages of hob-nobbing with a wealthy king. And it was made easier by the king's unusual personal appearance. Had he been black with thick lips and kinky hair—had he worn an Oriental visage, or had he even looked like the handsome native Hawaiians, it would have been more difficult to overlook some of the things he said and did.

But since his illness Royalton had been too astonished for words by the great change they found in him. He was still somewhat eccentric, and he did many funny things that one would have never supposed a king would do, and he often used slang like a newsboy, and his craving for amusement was really almost abnormal. He had little to say to the older members of society, but devoted himself to the gayest of the young people, and often led them into orgies that scandalized the more sedate. Yet he was forgiven even that.

"He is so young," they said, "and being a foreigner he cannot be expected to understand our customs and prejudices; he is intoxicated with his freedom from the exactions of court life; we must not criticize him harshly."

The king summed it all up in one sentence: "I am a king and can do what I damn please. That's the law this silly old world has made for its kings."

In his quiet moments it was understood that the king was amusing himself by writing a musical comedy. He said little

about it, however, but let it be known that the manuscript was kept in an iron safe he had caused to be brought to his room, which of course proved that he considered it very precious. Mrs. Somers was the only one to whom he had said anything that would give the remotest idea concerning his topic. He had asked her, one day, to write out the notes of a little melody that had been going through his head all day. He hummed it, while she picked out the notes on her piano, and finally he became so interested that he sang the words. She pretended to take no notice, but quietly wrote them down and shortly thereafter she showed them to Alfred Burton. It ran as follows:

“A king was completed today,
He’s not made in the usual way,
And the demons shriek as they sing—
‘Wullabaloola! Wullabaloola!
What a king!’ ”

“This seems to be followed by a sort of chant,” added Mrs. Somers, “that is really weird.” She tried to reproduce it.

“Abra, cabra, om, om, om;
Wand’ring spirit, come, come, come.
One-ery, two-ery, tickery dock;
Come at the twelfth stroke of the clock.
Abra, cabra, om, om, om;
Wand’ring spirit come, come, come.”

“Sounds rather silly, don’t you think?” asked Burton, in his carefully cultivated, detached manner.

“Yes, it does; but I can’t help thinking that the king doesn’t consider it silly, and that he isn’t doing it for fun.”

“For Pete’s sake, what could he be doing it for—senseless drivel like that!”

“Remember, we don’t know what action he plans to go with it. Somehow, I feel confident that he is writing this musical comedy to annoy Hicks Jarou.”

"Well, if Jarou can be annoyed by stuff like that, he's in need of a rest cure."

"You're dense, Alfred—rather more so than usual. You pay no attention to the significance of that second line—'he's not made in the usual way. Can't you see that might mean that Omar-Kouli wasn't born a king?'"

"Suppose he'd be telling it if he were not?"

"He might if he knew it would annoy Hicks Jarou."

"Why should he wish to annoy him?"

"Because he doesn't like him."

"How do you know that he doesn't?"

"He has said a number of things that, remembered and put together, point to that conclusion."

"Yet he expects to become heir to Jarou's property. I don't believe any sane man would take chances on losing out in a matter like that."

"Only yesterday I heard him call Hicks Jarou a confounded old fossil. And he makes all manner of fun of his pretensions as a scientist."

"I should say, then," replied Burton, judicially, "that he advertised his own limitations. Hicks Jarou is a very great scientist. Even a man, like myself, who doesn't care much about him, must admit that."

"The king declares that no scientist can be great who has no conception of God."

"You don't mean it! I had no idea that the king was religious."

"I don't know that he is, as we define the term. He doesn't seem to be interested in churches, yet he talks of God and life after death with such absolute conviction that he is really convincing."

"You seem to find him convincing."

"I find him very interesting. I never heard anyone talk so calmly of that place where souls may meet—where family reunions are held—all that sort of thing. He says, exactly

as if he knew all about it, that we are not so very different five minutes after leaving the body from what we were five minutes before. He scoffs at the idea that the process of passing out of the body makes angels of us all in the twinkling of an eye. Somehow his ideas seem so comfy to people like me who simply can't want to be an angel, and with the angels stand, a crown upon my forehead, a harp within my hand."

Burton laughed. "Really," he said, "your friends would find it difficult to picture you as that sort of an angel. I'm glad that the king has convinced you that you need not be transformed out of all likeness to your present charming self."

"Now you are pleased to be sarcastic. No woman particularly cares to have you compliment her, Alfred. We all know you never mean it."

"Sometimes I do. I am really very fond of you, in my way, Evelyn."

"You'll never be as fond of any woman as you are of yourself."

"No, I don't think I could be. But I care enough for you not to want you to marry that damned king."

"Do you think I'm in danger of doing that?"

"I don't know. I think he's making quite a desperate attempt to win you. Why don't you marry Franklin Potter?"

"Franklin Potter! Whatever put that into your head? He's never paid any attention to me, or I to him."

"You could win him if you tried."

"I could win you if I tried."

"Perhaps. Don't try. I have no desire for matrimony, and I can't understand why you should have. But you seem determined to marry again. I'm all out of patience with you."

"What makes you think I'm so crazy to marry?"

"I'm judging by the way you act. You used to be the best old scout I knew, but now—"

"A woman likes attention, whether she expects to be married or not. One hates to think one is too old for a flirtation."

"I'd pay you any amount of attention—flirt with you, too, if I could be sure it would never go any farther than that. Fact is, Evelyn, I'm afraid of you. But if you'd give me your word of honor—"

"Delightful flirtation we could have under such a condition as you'd impose!" scoffed Evelyn. "Fact is, Alfred, I don't want to flirt with you. But I want to keep you safely in my background, and so I'm not going to let anyone else marry you."

"That's all right. I don't want anyone else to marry me. I just want to be let alone. And I want you to stay single, so we can play around together."

"Yet you proposed Franklin Potter—"

"Only as the lesser of two evils. It seems to me he'd be a more appropriate match than the king. And I'm sure he is as anxious to marry as you seem to be."

"He does impress one as lonely, and loneliness is the only reason the middle-aged have for marrying. He is pleasant to meet, but I can't believe he'd ever be very dependable. He seems to me to be lacking in stability. I sometimes think he is a man without character."

"A man without character! He's rather well spoken of among men."

"I wonder if he has principles that he'd swear by—we don't know much about him—really. He has never said where he stands on any matter—"

"You wrong him there. He has proven that he is not afraid to speak out, when given an opportunity. I liked his exposure of Lord Southdown, also what he said about that Italian count who came here looking for a rich wife—and surely you haven't forgotten Sir Wilfred Yonge—whose grandfather, or some one, had been forbidden—"

"Oh, he's all to the good when it comes to genealogy!"

"It was nice the way he proved that Marie Manners was really an aristocrat, when she had never mentioned her belief

to that effect because she was too poor to live up to her social inheritance."

"He did her a real service. She is to marry the son of a soap manufacturer with oodles of money, who has been absolutely determined to buy an aristocratic wife for his precious offspring. And of course they'll be received."

"And Potter really brought it about."

"Haven't you guessed that Franklin wants to marry Beatrice?"

"We've all seen that; but he'll never do it."

"Why not?"

"She won't have him."

"So you propose to wish him off on me."

"Not unless you are determined to marry."

"Well, I'm going to think about it a little while longer. But—you just listen to me—I have no intention of meeting Old Age alone. I intend to find some one to sit by the fire with me when I'm too old to go to dances."

"And in the meanwhile?"

"Meanwhile, I'll play around with the king, as long as it seems to amuse us both."

"Very well. You'll find me butting in and spoiling your fun when you least desire my companionship."

When Alfred Burton left Mrs. Somers, he went straight to the little cottage where Nathan had his work shop. He was surprised to find Hicks Jarou there, in his shirt sleeves, working at the same table with Nathan, and every bit as busy. They were working on tiny models of houses which they were grouping into a very charming village.

"Tyrsanghee," said Hicks Jarou, indicating the village, "and more modern than any town of its size in America, not even excepting Hibbing, Minnesota."

"Hold on there!" exclaimed Nathan as he pushed the scientist's hand away from the village; "you're putting the mills where the school buildings are to go."

"No, am I? Then what is all this space for if not for car tracks?"

"That is to be the play ground—and here's the park. We'll put the mills and car tracks over here."

"You really think that's best?"

"I know it."

"Well, go ahead. Have it your own way. I suspect your judgment is better than mine in this case." He turned to Alfred, laughing. "Sometimes I find this chap fearfully stiff-necked," he said.

"Oh, I give up my share of the time," replied Nathan composedly, as he continued his arrangement of the toy village.

Alfred was surprised. He had never seen Hicks Jarou so companionable. He was as interested in the work before him as he could have been in a problem in biology, and he was as approachable as a boy.

"But why," objected Alfred, "spoil a perfectly good South Sea island, by planting in it a modern town? Seems to me that would rob the place of its charm."

"It will in a way," conceded Hicks Jarou, "but the place will be more livable to those who have become accustomed to modern homes."

"But you're planning on so many houses." ,

"I'm hoping a good many people will want to live there, when its attractions have been advertised. That is one reason why I'm training a few citizens—my servants—who will be able to train the Tyrsanghee natives to become good servants."

"You seem to have thought of everything," conceded Burton, as he thoughtfully studied the tiny village.

"I think I have. I am most anxious that the wife of King Omar-Kouli shall be very happy down there. Some day, I hope, the place will be known for its ideal government, its superior citizens, its college for research work, its discoveries in science—in fact for the things that make life worth living—but most emphatically not for its social follies."

"But what do you think will draw people there—white people, I mean?"

"I shall be a contributing influence, I hope," replied Hicks Jarou. "But understand—I do not mean to look for recruits among the smart sets of any country. I want thinkers, workers, earnest people from all over the world. I very much hope, for instance, that Nathan will make his home there, but I don't want men like you or Franklin Potter."

"Oh, I say!" protested Alfred, smiling, "can't you lay it on a little more gently? Of course, I can readily understand why I'm not classed with the producers—but Franklin Potter seems to keep pretty busy."

"He wouldn't fit into my plans for Tyrsanghee," replied Hicks Jarou, with decision, "but I want Nathan; and I can't get his promise to go."

"I haven't said I wouldn't go," replied Nathan, whose attention was evidently more on his work than it was on what he was saying.. "In fact, I expect to go down and help put this town on the map. After that I'll probably be guided by circumstances."

"Good!" exclaimed Hicks Jarou, cheerfully. "Glad to get that much of a promise out of you! Do you know," turning again to Alfred, "Nathan is the hardest man to pin down that I've ever met."

"Then don't try to pin me down," replied Nat calmly. "A man came in here a few days ago with a proposition he wanted me to agree to—and he actually brought a contract along. That settled it."

"It would—with you," chuckled Hicks Jarou. "You'd run from a contract as most men would run from the plague."

"I should feel that it would rob me of my freedom—and that is something I value more than my life—freedom to do my best, in my own way—to live as seems good to me—not as others dictate. And that is why I quarrel with a part of your plans for Tyrsanghee."

Hicks Jarou laughed. "He quarrels with me," he explained to Burton, "because I plan to train some of the Tyrsanghee natives to become good servants."

"I can't see anything wrong about that," replied Burton.

"You wouldn't," said Nathan, "because you have no conception of what is meant by the brotherhood of man. Why train any man to do what you wouldn't do yourself?"

"Nat would never have asked that question," said Hicks Jarou, "if he possessed even a little knowledge of biology. Nat, some day I'm going to introduce you to Albert Edward Wiggam. He'll prove to you that there are people who can't be anything else but servants, because that is their inheritance. We confer a benefit on humanity when we help them to do the only thing that could stand between them and humanity."

"If I have a correct understanding of Wiggams' philosophy," said Burton, "I should say that he would sterilize the unfit out of existence as fast as possible, and that you'd be conferring a greater benefit on humanity by letting them starve rather than training them to earn food."

"Do you know Wiggam?" asked Jarou, his face lighting up with pleasure.

"I've met him. He has taken time, occasionally, to tell me things he thinks I ought to know."

"And you listened?"

"I was glad to listen."

"Good! I didn't know you very well—not as I hope to know you."

"I hope you'll find me worthy," was Burton's modest rejoinder.

"He will," remarked Nat placidly; "you're not half as empty-headed as you try to appear."

"Well," said Hicks Jarou, rising, "I must rejoin my guest." He went to the door, and then turned to gaze wistfully at Nathan who was bent over his work again, too engrossed to notice that his employer was leaving. "We've had one more

happy hour together, haven't we, Nathan," he asked almost wistfully.

"You bet we have," replied Nathan heartily, but without looking up from his work.

When Hicks Jarou had closed the door behind him, Nathan said, "There goes one of the loneliest men I have ever met. Actually, I seem to be the only man he cares to talk to—yet it would seem as if he might have the scientific world at his feet if he'd make a sign to show that it would give him pleasure."

"What do you suppose is the trouble with him," queried Alfred.

"I don't suppose; I know. He needs some sort of religious belief. He is the most confirmed materialist I have ever known, and so his life is robbed of its meaning. And he won't listen to argument. He doesn't want to be convinced, because he has some silly notion that to accept a belief in immortality would be to overthrow all his work has meant to him."

"Aren't scientists rather rank materialists as a rule?"

"Some of them are, but none of them need to be. I've tried to make him see that, but he won't listen."

"Say, Nat, I didn't know you went in for religion—that is, not particularly."

"I didn't in the old days. I should never have done what I did, if I could have known just a little of what I learned by being killed."

"I see," said Alfred, softly. "You've never told me about that experience—"

"And I'm not going to tell you now," interrupted Nathan. "It would assuage your curiosity perhaps, but it wouldn't do you any good. I will simply say that I learned that we are each put on this earth to do a certain part toward helping along God's great plan, and that we've got to be sorry either here or hereafter, if we side-step our obligations. And I will add that I know—*know* mind you—I'm not just guessing, or hoping, or

believing—I know that there is a life after this, the comfort of which depends upon the quality of the life lived here.”

“That is very interesting,” replied Alfred.

“You’d like to say interesting *if true*,” replied Nathan with a smile. “I know. I’ve been as you are now. But life as a whole—both here and hereafter—has become the most interesting subject in the world to me, and there’s only one person I know with whom I can discuss it.”

“Who is that favored one?” asked Alfred a little jealously, for he liked to think he was Nathan’s most intimate friend.

“King Omar-Kouli,” was Nathan’s unexpected reply.

“That travesty!” exclaimed Alfred indignantly. “I didn’t realize you were joking.”

“I wasn’t. I mean what I say. King Omar-Kouli has wonderful spiritual perceptions, and I am very happy when we can have a half hour alone together.”

“He certainly knows how to hide his ability to think.”

“Why not? Who, among your friends, would care to know that he thinks? Isn’t he giving the Royalton smart set what it can best appreciate?”

Alfred Burton went home that evening in a very thoughtful mood. He had gone to Nathan hoping to get hold of some bit of information that would give him a clue to the king’s character—not the sort of clue that had been given him—but something that could be used to prevent either Evelyn Somers or Beatrice Willis from marrying the man he so deeply distrusted. And he had learned that the king was simply trying to give his friends what he believed they were able to appreciate—and that he had another side to his character that could interest a man like Nathan Hawkins.

CHAPTER XIV

Good drama was being enacted in Royalton; but like most instances where it rises far above the mediocre, it was not being recognized as such. There was much really excellent by-play—instances that were decidedly dramatic, and would have been so recognized, had not the affairs of King Omar-Kouli been so very absorbing that they dwarfed every other center of emotion. Which would be finally chosen as Queen of Tyrsanghee—Evelyn Somers or Beatrice Willis? It was quite generally agreed that he was more interested in Mrs. Somers, but that for some reason not explained, he believed Beatrice would make the more suitable queen. He divided his attentions pretty evenly between them, and still found time and opportunity to flirt with several other pretty girls—none of whom proved unwilling. He was the most delightful playfellow the girls of Royalton had ever known, and no entertainment was considered worth attending unless his presence was guaranteed. No one asked whether the ladies he waited upon would accept him, should he propose. It was a generally accepted fact that he could marry anyone he wanted.

Men did not like King Omar-Kouli; but after all that was not so very surprising. Women set that down to jealousy, and usually laughed when some man friend warned them not to get too intimate with King Omar-Kouli. The great trouble was that they always failed to give a good reason for their warning. They couldn't. To say that "they had a hunch" and fail to provide proof was not very convincing.

On several occasions Alfred Burton had warned Mrs. Somers. He had angrily told her, on each occasion, that he'd never again take the trouble, that he really didn't care what happened, that she could do as she pleased, and he hoped she would live to remember what he had said and to wish that she had taken

his advice—and always she had laughed and gone on flirting with the king and kept everyone wondering if she would win him in the end.

After his latest warning, Mrs. Somers had surprised Alfred by saying, “don’t worry so, Alfred. I shall not suffer, whatever I do. I suffered all I was capable of suffering when my husband died. When he went away, he took my heart with him. Whatever I may decide to do with myself will be done simply for the sake of companionship—and change. And I shall feel that my husband will understand, and that some day I shall go to him and we’ll be companions again.”

“Is that what you really believe?” asked Alfred curiously.

“It is what I have come to believe—since I’ve been so chummy with King Omar-Kouli.”

“Is the king a spiritualist?”

“Something like that, I think. Anyhow, he has made me believe in a life after death, a doctrine that I never before could really accept. He says Nathan Hawkins believes, too, and that Nathan has had an experience—you know—after he was shot—that has convinced him of the reality of life after death. He is sure that we preserve our identity after the great change—that we meet our dear ones and know them—that we can be together while working out the next step—the next great change — Oh, Alfred, it is wonderful! I do wish you could get Nathan Hawkins to call on me! I want to talk to him — intimately — and he won’t so much as recognize me. He talks of his experiences to a stranger, like the king; why won’t he talk to an old friend?”

“He probably does not recognize you as an old friend,” replied Alfred.

“He accepts you.”

“He puts up with my companionship, when I get him cornered, but always he shows that he has very little use for me. I don’t believe I could persuade him to see you — and I don’t believe he’d talk if he did see you — not intimately. I’ve tried to get

him to tell me his experiences — but it seems that the king is the only one who is really in his confidence.”

“I’ve been so interested in what the king has told me. Do you know, he says it is possible for one to send one’s astral on long journeys — outside the body — even to meet people who have gone before. He won’t tell me how to do it, but he says that sometime he’ll try to get into communication with my husband.”

“Evelyn, such talk is dangerous. It leads to insanity. Don’t have anything more to do with that man. He is a rank fakir. He ought to be tarred and feathered and escorted out of town on a rail — in the good old-fashioned way.”

“Burned at the stake, too?” asked Evelyn, innocently. “Haven’t we civilized beings gotten away from the idea of punishing those who don’t agree with us?”

“Well, anyhow, promise me you won’t marry that man. There is something radically wrong with him. I can’t find out what it is, but I know I’m right about it.”

“He may be radically wrong,” replied Evelyn, “but you must admit that he is very interesting. He keeps us all guessing, and life is never a drag when he is around.”

“Evelyn, will you marry me?”

“You ask that because you hope in that way to save me from the king! That’s very sweet of you, Alfred — but I’m not fooled. I know just how ready you are to marry anyone. Really, Alfred, dear, you have nothing to offer in dazzling futures that can compete with Omar-Kouli. Why should I marry you?”

“My prediction is that if you marry that fakir, you’ll live to wish you had married me.”

“Oh, you and I wouldn’t make such an impossible couple,” she replied, carelessly. “We would have the advantage of not expecting from each other what neither could give. You would know that my heart remains with my husband; I would know that yours will never beat for anyone but yourself. And I

suppose we could offer each other the sort of companionship that we both understand."

"Yes," replied Burton, "at least, we could give that."

"Some day," continued Evelyn, "we may find it worth considering — some day when we are too old to be interesting to the younger set, and time has separated us from those who find us interesting now. I can imagine such a condition."

"I presume you'd like to add, some day when you have divorced the king — or he has divorced you!"

"Oh, let me be the one to divorce him. That's more complimentary."

"Have it your own way. It will be a catastrophe, however you put it."

Mrs Somers laughed. "Well, let's not worry about a catastrophe that may never overtake us. We may die sooner than we think—and notwithstanding your kind offer, I may become Queen Omar-Kouli, and die in far off Tyrsanghee with savages dancing around my flaming funeral pyre."

But the next few weeks made that contingency seem rather less probable than it had seemed to Alfred that day when he angrily left the presence of Mrs. Somers. It was observed that the king was seen more frequently at the afternoon teas that Mrs. Willis still gave the appearance of being Royalton's most exclusive function. Mrs. Willis treated him with charming deference, but Beatrice held herself aloof. It was this air of aloofness that was now attracting the king.

"I have got to prove to that young lady that I am not to be ignored," he said one evening to Hicks Jarou. "I don't mind her little air of independence — in fact I admire it; but she can't continue treating me as if I were something the cat brought in. I won't stand for it."

Hicks Jarou's eyes gleamed, and he received his first impressive lesson in the ways of a woman. He had not been satisfied with the behavior of Beatrice. He had said so to her mother and had intimated that there might be disagreeable

consequences, financially, if she did not show a better control over her daughter. Now he saw that Beatrice had taken the best way possible to divert the king's attention from Evelyn Somers.

"Have you decided, then, to marry Miss Willis?" he asked.

"Not at all. I'm simply going to compel her to give me the consideration due me."

"I think she does that already," replied Jarou, curtly. "You certainly do not deserve the consideration one would give to a man who respects himself and his position."

"Holy Smoke! that's one straight from the shoulder." The king was silent for a moment. "Do you know," he suddenly exclaimed, "I believe you're right about that. I've been holding myself too cheaply. I must change all that. I ought still to be actor enough to put up a pretty good likeness of a pre-Victorian king."

And that is what he proceeded to do, and Royalton was shaken by a new sensation. The king was not himself at all. At least, he did not appear at all as he had been. He was giving himself airs. He was exclusive. He was assuming an importance that was not to be conceded after his display of democratic ideals. The younger set found him less amusing. The more thoughtful citizens who had ventured to criticize him, were perplexed. He was no longer treated with the familiarity which he had seemed to enjoy. He now made it understood, but without saying so, that he had grown weary of that sort of companionship. He declared he had adopted his previous air of intimacy simply as a means to study Royalton's younger set. He was done with that phase of his visit. From now on he would give more time to his musical comedy, and less to social dissipations. He let it be known that his musical comedy would give an excellent picture of a king's sojourn in a democratic country—and for some reason the smart set did not feel quite comfortable. What, exactly, would that "excellent picture" be like? They suddenly realized that he could, if he

wished, tell secrets that would make them the laughing stock of an unsympathetic proletariat—and that wouldn't be at all nice. Would he do a thing like that? Had he been studying them—and did he mean it when he said that Nathan Hawkins was better worth knowing than anyone else in Royalton? At the time, it was received as one of his reckless speeches, meant to be laughed at—and they had all laughed. But perhaps he did mean it. If so, what was it about Nathan that he found so interesting? Would Nathan, also, figure in the musical comedy?

There was one person in Royalton who was not worrying about that musical comedy. Her anxiety was such that it left her no moment of peace in which to think of anything but her own immediate problem. Mrs. Willis was grieving because her daughter did not speak to her, except in the briefest possible of replies, when asked some leading question. Beatrice was keeping her own room as much as possible. When asked if she were ill, she had replied, politely but distantly, "no, thanks, I'm just trying to think things out—plan my future, you know. I'll tell you about it when it has been decided," for all the world as if her own mother no longer had anything to say about it. And that was the longest speech she had made since that night when she had learned of the debt to Hicks Jarou, and how she was expected to pay it.

Mrs. Willis was frantic. She was also aggrieved. She pitied herself. She really had not thought that Beatrice would take it like that. Beatrice was unreasonable. She had believed the child would understand that the debt had been made largely on her account—simply that she might have as good a start in life as her friends enjoyed. Other mothers had selected husbands for their daughters, and the roof had not been brought down over their devoted heads. And probably there was not one among the other mothers who really believed that the husband selected was good enough for the beloved daughter. She, herself, was convinced that there wasn't a man in Royalton good enough for Beatrice—not one whom she really wanted for a

son-in-law. She certainly did not want King Omar-Kouli—but she'd a hundred times rather have him than Hicks Jarou. Hicks Jarou! That was where the shoe pinched. She knew that her daughter was interested in the white-haired scientist, and she believed that, notwithstanding the disparity in ages, Beatrice would marry him if he asked her. True, she was exceedingly angry with him now. That was something for which to be thankful. To believe that Hicks Jarou proposed to buy her for a wife for the king seemed to have been all that was needed to shatter any romantic feeling she may have had for him. Thank Heaven, that was one big worry cleared away. But was it cleared away? If Jarou happened to realize her feeling for him—change his mind about marriage—let a young girl feed his vanity—propose marriage—could there be any doubt as to the girl's answer? Mrs. Willis groaned in spirit. If Beatrice married Jarou, she would never see her daughter again. God couldn't be so cruel as to give her Hicks Jarou for a son-in-law. She hated the king and his Tyrsanghee—but he'd be better than Jarou. Was there no other way out of the dilemma? Then, once again as she had so frequently done of late, she turned her thoughts toward Franklin Potter. He was far from being good enough for Beatrice—but if he could step between them and Hicks Jarou—oh, if he only could rescue her and Beatrice!

She called Potter over the phone. Could she take a few moments of his precious time? Thanks so much. She would be in his office within the hour. She was. Mr. Potter was delighted. He felt indebted to whatever it was that had provided him the very great pleasure of a call from the most charming lady of his acquaintance. And then the tea-table was brought out, quite as if they were in dear old England, and soon the scene was set for the disclosure of whatever it was that brought her there. He sincerely hoped that she had not come to tell him that Beatrice had changed her mind, and would marry him.

"Franklin," she began, "you know how I depend upon you—quite as if you really were my son."

Franklin bowed his acknowledgements, and hoped that his countenance remained calm, and that she had not heard the gulping noise made by his Adam's apple.

"Well, I'm worried almost to death. I've got to have advice — and in order to make myself clear, I've got to tell something about my personal affairs that I'd rather die than divulge."

"Of course if I can help you," murmured Franklin, his voice dying away so that the remainder of his assurance was inaudible.

"Here's the situation in a nut shell: I owe quite a sum of money — and I can't pay it without help."

"I'm sorry to hear that. Now a small amount — if a small amount would help — I'd be only too glad—"

"I need fifty thousand dollars."

"Fifty thousand! You don't mean fifty thousand!"

"Does that seem to you like an impossible sum? I didn't think any man would find it so. Money goes so fast. It buys so little. And oh, how hard it is to get! I've never had very much — I've always been obliged to pinch the pennies — to strive in every way to make ends meet. I hoped fifty thousand wouldn't sound very fearsome to a man."

"Of course it isn't much—as money is reckoned in these days. To men who have that much it really seems like nothing worth mentioning."

"Yes. That's what I thought you'd say."

"It is a comparatively small sum," continued Franklin soothingly, "and I'm sure you need not worry about it. You have so many friends to whom it would be a mere bagatelle."

"Bagatelle!" repeated Mrs. Willis. "To me it is like a mill-stone tied to my neck. It is enormous. It clutches me like an octopus. It robs me of sleep. It haunts me. It hangs over me like the sword of Damocles. I never dreamed that mere money could make one suffer so."

"To whom do you owe it?"

"To Hicks Jarou," whispered Mrs. Willis, and her teeth actually chattered.

"Hicks Jarou is a fiend," muttered Franklin Potter.

"No," replied Mrs. Willis, quickly, "I can't say that, honestly. He didn't offer me the money. I asked for it. I was in trouble. I didn't know which way to turn. I appealed to him, knowing that I did not deserve fair treatment, because years ago, when I was a girl I had not treated him fairly. I really have no right to blame him for lending me money when I asked for it. Why do you think him a fiend?" she asked, suddenly suspicious; "did he force his help on you?"

"No," admitted Franklin; "he didn't. He made me an offer and I accepted it. I was very glad to accept it. It looked like a very wonderful offer. I could not see that it would lead to—well—something very like slavery."

"Slavery!" repeated Mrs. Willis, "oh, that sounds terrible! And I had hoped you could help me."

"I have never had as much as fifty thousand dollars at any time in my life."

"Don't you have a fixed salary, or allowance, or whatever it is? People say you are a remittance man — from England—"

"I am from England. I was in London when I met Hicks Jarou. I suppose I have more to spend than any remittance man. I can spend as much as I care to, but every month I must give an itemized account of all I spend. There can be no investments, no accumulating bank account — nothing that might offer a hope of future independence. I am being very frank with you, because we are in the same boat, and I am sorry for you. But I could not help you pay your debt to Hicks Jarou, although there is nothing on earth that would give me greater pleasure."

"And the king — is he also a slave?"

"I think not. At one time I was quite sure he was, but I think I was mistaken. He seems to be very independent. Sometimes Hicks Jarou appears to be more afraid of the king

than the king is of Jarou. I do not understand their relationship. While they seem to be opposed to each other, in a way, yet they also seem to be dependent upon each other."

"The king says he is wealthy in his own right. Do you believe that?"

"I have no reason to doubt it. The island of Tyrsanghee must be fabulously wealthy. I am sure that is where Hicks Jarou obtains most of his money."

"Well, if the king is not objectionable to Beatrice, I suppose the best thing she can do is to marry him. And if she did she would see that the debt to Hicks Jarou was discharged."

"But in some way, I'm convinced that she, too, would become a slave to Hicks Jarou."

"Do you think the king would allow that? You say he asserts his own independence — that he seems able to make Jarou fear him—"

"I know; but a burnt child dreads the fire, and I can't believe she would escape. Neither you nor I could even guess at our present predicament when we accepted financial aid from Hicks Jarou. His ways are circuitous. The very fact that he insists upon this marriage is enough to fill me with alarm."

"What can I do about it? How can I prevent it, since you are unable to help me."

"Haven't you urged Beatrice to marry him if he asked her to?"

"Yes, I have. I couldn't see any other way out."

"Well, why not warn her to think twice before doing so? Why not tell her to take plenty of time for consideration—that you'd rather she decided against him?"

"For the same reason," interrupted Mrs. Willis, "that you do not go to Hicks Jarou and proclaim your independence. He could ruin us — send us to the poor-house. You and I are both afraid of poverty. We have sat beside the flesh-pots too long. We are too old to change. We are so afraid of being poor that we cling to Hicks Jarou as a drowning man clings—to whatever comes within reach. We may as well admit it."

Franklin Potter bowed his head in silent assent. He knew that Mrs. Willis spoke the miserable truth.

"Mrs. Willis," he asked, "what will you do if Beatrice marries the king? Will you go with her to Tyrsanghee?"

"Not if I can help it," replied Mrs. Willis, with decision. "I really do not think Beatrice would want me to do that."

"Your presence might make her life more endurable."

"On the other hand, it would be well to keep a home open for her here — in case of divorce."

"You think it might come to that?"

"Can anyone think otherwise? And after all it may be the best solution." Mrs. Willis' mind was working well. She was once more optimistic. "Her marriage would annul the debt we now owe, and her alimony would take care of us afterward."

"It may have to be done," faltered Franklin, "it looks like the only way out. It wouldn't be so bad if the king were — if he were really a king."

"Good lord, you endorsed him! Didn't you know what you were talking about?" Mrs. Willis spoke sharply. "You don't mean that Hicks Jarou compelled you to endorse a fraud! You didn't do that, did you?"

"No, oh, no! I meant to say — oh, why do I have to be mixed up in this damned affair!"

"Franklin Potter, what do you mean? I think you owe it to me to tell me exactly why you do not want Beatrice to marry King Omar-Kouli, if you really do not want her to. Is it because you want to marry her yourself?"

"She doesn't care for me. She wouldn't marry me, even if the king married Evelyn Somers, as we all thought for a while that he meant to do. Beatrice told me very definitely that she could not marry me because she loved another man. And even if she were willing to marry me I could not assume your debts."

"Well," replied Mrs. Willis, "the king is young, handsome, wealthy, yes, and I presume he really is considered interesting."

The only question is did you live up to your own standard when preparing his genealogical record?"

"You have no cause to worry about that," replied Franklin Potter in his most convincing manner.

"I'm glad to hear that. Well, I must be going. How I wish, Franklin, that you could have helped me. I don't want her to marry the king."

"Neither do I. We are both absolutely powerless to save her. It is horrible! Horrible!"

They both looked as they felt — miserably unhappy, fiercely resentful, fearful of the future, ashamed of their slavery. And yet, so powerful are the tentacles of wealth, so alluring the life of ease, that they could more easily sell their own souls than take the step that would compel them to get out and hustle for their bread and butter — granting that they could have secured the butter.

CHAPTER XV.

While Mrs. Willis was having her conference with Franklin Potter, her daughter had also dressed for the street and was on her way to see Hicks Jarou.

Beatrice had decided that she could not be comfortable until she had told him, in no uncertain terms, just what she thought of a man who was willing to buy a white girl as men used to buy negroes. She meant to put it just like that. She would give him no opportunity to plead, what she recognized as a fact, that in these days the money consideration was usually a deciding factor in marriage. Neither did she intend to allow him to say too much about the part her mother had played in the transaction. She meant to declare that he had taken advantage of a widow, inexperienced in business, who was in desperate trouble, financially, for no more reprehensible reason than that she had loved her only daughter too well and had been too indulgent.

In her heart, Beatrice did not believe that. She had reached the dreary conclusion that her mother's love for her was second to her love for her own comfort—that she would let her daughter suffer greatly if that would ward off even a little suffering for herself. She felt quite alone in the world since she had come to this conclusion—as if she had lost a dearly loved mother. And yet she did not blame her mother. She realized too clearly what the worship of wealth could do for the individual and the social world. Her mother was in the toils. She could not get out because she could never be brought to believe that the world held anything more desirable.

“And she really is my mother,” thought Beatrice, “although she seems more like my child. I can never again look up to her, but I shall always love and pity her. And I owe her every care and comfort I can give her.”

Beatrice resolved that her world should never know of the disillusionizing process going on within her. Her mother's defects should never be advertised. She should be upheld as the queen of motherhood.

Because she was suffering so intensely, she determined to do her best to make Hicks Jarou suffer also. She did not ask herself why she wanted him to suffer, or why she wanted to be the one to make him suffer. She was acting blindly according to the urge to go to him—the man she had called her best friend—and hurt him to the core.

Had she analyzed that undefined urge honestly, she would have realized that she wanted to make him suffer because he had not asked her to marry him—thus providing what she believed to be the easiest and pleasantest way out of her difficulties.

Beatrice decided to walk to Jarou's house—she always thought more clearly when on her feet—and she preferred to have the conference in his home than in her own, where her mother might interrupt them at any moment. She realized that unmarried girls were not expected to call upon unmarried men in their own homes, even in these days when many of the girls she knew were declaring themselves absolutely independent of all social customs that happened to interfere with their desires. She followed their revolutionary pronouncements at a safe distance, and declared her independence when it did not seriously matter—but at heart she was a nice girl, obedient, modest and self-respecting. She did not feel quite comfortable going alone to the home of Hicks Jarou to make him suffer as he deserved, but she had no intention of turning back.

She had reached the street that ran along beside the park for several blocks—beautiful Willow Street, so named for the giant willow trees that lined it on both sides, and made a lovely leafy roof for young couples who usually chose that street for their moonlight walks. She and Percy Southdown had sauntered down that street and into the park on many an evening, exactly as young people without automobiles were doing, and had en-

joyed a thrill that an automobile or even an airplane never gave her. She was thinking about that—wondering what life would have been like if her lover had been what he pretended to be—a young aristocrat with time, money, everything that life could offer at his command. Percy had been a most satisfactory lover. That had been her happy time. She believed that she had given him a love that was better worth having than anything she could ever bring another man. And he had been unworthy. He had killed the beautiful emotion he had kindled in her heart. She wondered if he ever thought of what he had done to her life—and was sorry.

And then she felt the old familiar touch on her arm. His hand rested under her elbow, in the old way, and he was gently turning her aside from the street into the narrow shady path that ran along one side of the park and was known as Lover's Lane. She turned astonished eyes in his direction. How strange it was to see him clad in the garments of a workman—when in all other respects he appeared to be so unchanged.

"Aren't you—presumptuous?" she managed to inquire, icily.

"Very," he replied with a smile; "but I hope you'll forgive me, if I promise not to do it again." How friendly his voice sounded. She had forgotten what a pleasant voice he had.

"Why have you done it this time?" she was still exceedingly dignified—but she was going where he guided her without making any effort to escape. She was very curious to know how much of the old Percy remained. She wanted to hear what he had to say. She believed that her love for him was dead—that she would not marry him, now, even though he might have a fortune to offer her—but she suddenly felt that in spite of all that had happened, she could trust him—that it would be easy to tell him all her troubles—to ask his advice—in fact, she welcomed this opportunity to be alone with him.

"Why have I done it this time?" he repeated her question with his old-time grin that she had always found so irresistible; "principally because I happened to be at this particular

spot at the same time you were, I suppose. I've been wanting to talk with you—but not at your home—and I was not sure you'd come here for a walk if I asked you to."

"I certainly should not," replied Beatrice with haughty decision—"but now we are here, we may as well be seated."

They both realized, when seated, that they had chosen the park bench where some of their happiest hours had been spent, and so they both became a little awkward in their effort to appear absolutely unaware that there could be any reminders of their past that were not buried long ago. But it wouldn't work. There was something between them that must first be cleared away—there were thoughts clamoring for expression—a bond that had not yet been broken and which must be forever destroyed before they could be comfortable together.

"Percy," she said, brokenly, "why did you do it?" The question surprised her as much as it did him. Her unexpected yielding to emotion angered her. She must—she would—call back her dignity.

"Don't call me that—ever again—please!" Percy—Nathan was speaking, and with something more in his tone than pleading or decision. "That name," he said, "represents a phase of my life of which I am desperately ashamed. I went into all that nonsense more for a love of adventure than anything else. I wanted to see if I could put it over. It was exciting at first. I never dreamed that I should meet you—learn to love you—learn to hate myself because of my love for you—God, how ashamed I am when I think of it. I'd give half my life—but that is not what I wanted to talk to you about."

"Couldn't you have confided in me—if you really loved me?"

"Not as I was—before—you know! Let's not talk about it. It doesn't help to mull over a thing like that. I was a coward in those days. If I had told you who I was—what I was—I should have lost you."

"You lost me as it was; but you might not have lost me, had I been told the truth. A title never appealed to me very strongly."

"But there was the disgrace! What I had done was so outrageous. No one could have forgiven that."

"I might have done so. I think I could have realized that everyone makes mistakes. Of course I might not have felt all that just at first. Very likely I'd have been difficult—but somehow I believe I should have understood eventually."

"But I had spent nearly all the money I had. You would never have married a poor man."

"How do you know that? I don't know it. I've never been poor—I don't know what it would be like to be poor—but I was very fond of you—while I trusted you. The awakening was terrible. Oh, I suffered—but I didn't let anyone guess that. My pride carried me through."

"I know. I watched you. I guessed what you were enduring. It was the worse part of my punishment to know that I had given you every reason to despise me."

"Why did you remain in Royalton? How could you bear to meet those who had known you—before it all happened?"

"There were many reasons for my remaining—not the least of which was that I saw I might be of real service to Hicks Jarou. He gave me an opportunity to regain my self-respect—in a measure—and at the same time repay him for what he did for me. And when I had gone through my amazing experience—the old life was almost as if it had never been. I see clearly, now, think clearly—my memory is excellent—but how much of the old life seems like a dream. I'm sorry for the chap who could waste his time as I wasted mine. I'm very, very thankful for my opportunity to prove that I am not all bad. Actually, about all that has survived that terrible experience is my feeling for you."

"Why did you not ask for your money back? Why begin at the bottom without a penny, when ten thousand dollars belonged to you?"

"That money was not honestly earned. I felt that it would do me no real good. I was glad to be rid of it."

"Why did you say in your will that you were sorry for Franklin Potter?"

"I am sorry for him, but I can't tell you why. He knows. It is his secret, not mine. Beatrice, that is one of the reasons I wanted to have this talk. I don't want you to marry Franklin Potter."

"Who told you anything about that?"

"I haven't forgotten the days when you played us off against each other. I was often fiercely jealous of him—and I have reason to know that he was even more fiercely jealous of me. Now I am out of the running—but I just saw your mother go into Potter's beautiful private office. I was there making some repairs. I overheard a question concerning his finances—don't think I stopped to listen for I didn't. But I heard enough to guess what was in your mother's mind—and I determined to warn you."

"Warn me? After acknowledging that you are jealous of him?"

"That I *was* jealous, dear; that is all a part of the past. Now I only want what is for your real happiness—and I am convinced that Potter is not the man to make you happy."

"He seems to be fond of me," said Beatrice, with a little secret smile. She could not resist the opportunity to test him—to discover if he still cared enough for her to be jealous of her.

"I fancy he cares as much for you as he can care for anyone except himself. Franklin Potter is absolutely selfish; he will never allow anything or anyone to come between him and his personal comfort. I know that. He is one of the men who will probably always be called a good representative citizen

—but he is also one of the men who could even kill his own wife if he wished to marry a younger or wealthier woman.”

“What a horrible thing to say about anyone!”

“I wouldn’t say it if I believed a less pleasant statement would influence you—as I hope to influence you. You can make some man a wonderful wife, Beatrice; don’t waste yourself on a man like Franklin Potter.”

“But I think you have been unfair to him. You make me wish to take his part. I had not supposed you could say such an awful thing against anyone.”

“As I have tried to explain—I am doing it to save you.”

“And I feel that you are doing it because you are jealous.”

“Beatrice, listen! I am going to tell you a secret, and I am going to do so believing that you will never tell it to anyone. It is this: I had received an anonymous letter threatening me with death if I did not break off our engagement and leave the city. I traced it down and learned, what I had suspected, that it was sent by Franklin Potter. That is why I said in my will that I expected to be killed. That is why I pitied Franklin Potter.”

“And then you very courageously committed suicide and left me to the tender mercies of a man like that!”

“No, I did not commit suicide. Poor old Potter shot me!”

“Shot you! Do you mean that? But of course you can’t mean that!”

“That is what happened. Of course he was beside himself with jealousy. He didn’t realize what he was doing. And he has suffered. I don’t want to add to his punishment — but neither do I want you to marry him.”

“I had no intention of marrying him. I have told him so.”

“Oh, Beatrice—if I had only known! It wasn’t kind of you to let me go on—misunderstanding. I need not have told about poor Potter—if you’d played fair.”

"But why should you keep a thing like that? I think it ought to be told. Why let him go on as if nothing had happened—as if he were not a murderer—"

"Beatrice, remember, I trusted you. And in a way, you got that information when you were not entitled to it; you deceived me. It is not fair for me to judge Potter. I hold nothing against him. In fact, his act gave me the most wonderful experience a man could have. It made me acquainted with the man I was born to be—with the man I hope to become. I never meant to mention Potter's mistake to anyone. You know I would not have done so if I had not believed it was the only way to save you."

"Yes. I was wrong to let you imagine I meant to marry him. Please believe I'll never tell anyone what you have just told me."

"Thank you. I'm sure you won't."

"I can't imagine why mother went to see Franklin. She knows I have refused to marry him."

"Perhaps she hopes you will reconsider. She may believe he has money enough to keep you comfortably."

"She must know that I meant what I said."

"Well, I have delivered my message—cleared my conscience. I'm feeling more comfortable about you now." He stood up, as he said this. So far as he was concerned the interview was ended.

"I appreciate your interest in my welfare," said Beatrice, somewhat vaguely. She was thinking hard! How could she tell him her trouble—get his advice—keep him beside her a few minutes longer.

"I must get back to my work," he was saying, "but please remember, dear, if ever I can be of service to you, I hope you will call upon me. Won't you promise to do that?"

"Yes, I promise." Mischievous dimples played around her mouth. "I'll begin right now to keep that promise."

He was standing before her, holding out his hand to help her to her feet. He thought she, too, would be on her way. But to his surprise she took his hand and held it. "Sit down a moment. Please. You see, I have not had time to ask you about something I want to know."

"You think I can help you?" He spoke eagerly. "I hope I shall not disappoint you."

"Tell me what you know of King Omar-Kouli."

"I fancy I don't know anything about him that you have not discovered for yourself. What would you like to know?"

"Do you think he is related in any way to Hicks Jarou?"

"Related to Mr. Jarou! I'd never thought of that. Yet it would answer many little puzzling questions, wouldn't it?"

"Of course anyone who thinks must have guessed that there is some strong bond between them. Else why should Mr. Jarou care whom the king marries?"

"I think his heart is quite wrapped up in the future of Tyrsanghee. You'd be interested in hearing his plans for the village he is to build there—and especially interested to hear him tell about his mines. But I sometimes think he has no real reason for working those mines, because I believe the man has discovered how to make gold."

"No; really?"

"I can't prove it—but I believe it. Oh, he is a very wonderful scientist. I don't believe the world will realize how wonderful until long after his death."

"His home is beautiful—although a little too ornate."

"It does not fit him at all. He doesn't care for display. Sometimes he has asked me to dine with him. We would dine on rye bread so dry it snapped when we broke it in our milk. That and a little fruit was all we had; yet his servants always have whatever they want. His tastes are very simple, and while we are eating our bread and milk, he talks so entrancingly that when I leave him, I don't remember whether I ate anything or not."

"My, but you are enthusiastic! No one else in Royalton seems to adore him as you do."

"Possibly no one else knows him as well. And I do not feel that I really know him. But what I do know of him appeals to me powerfully."

"I wonder why he has never married?"

"He is married to his scientific research. I hope he'll never make any other kind of marriage."

"Why not? I should think he'd be just the sort of man who needs the care of a good woman."

"I believe he'd find a woman a good deal of a nuisance—and I'm quite sure he couldn't make any woman happy. He thinks only of his research work. He would allow nothing to stand between him and that work. I once told him that I believed he could cut up his own grandmother if that seemed necessary to prove a biological truth."

"How did you dare to say a thing like that to him?"

"Oh, we talk quite freely when we are working together. I like him, but I believe he could be ruthless. I should not care to be in his power. I'd never allow him to dominate me in the smallest matter, because I can see that it is his nature to dominate—and to despise those he dominates, and I'll never let him start any thing like that with me."

"But if he doesn't believe in marriage for himself, why is he trying so hard to get a wife for the king?"

"That is quite a different matter. The king is not a scientist—and he expects to marry and to have children. He has theories about the duty of a monarch to leave the right kind of heirs to govern his country. He has talked with me about that!"

"But still," persisted Beatrice, "I don't understand why Mr. Jarou should be so very anxious that he'd be willing to pay fifty thousand dollars to secure a wife for his majesty—nor why he should have more to say about the future queen than King Omar-Kouli himself."

"Beatrice, do you mind telling me exactly what you are talking about? I don't get the idea. How do you know he is willing to pay—anything at all—for a wife for the king?"

"If I tell you, it is understood that you keep what I say to yourself?"

"Surely; if you ask me to."

"I do. I've been wishing I could talk to some one about it—some one I could trust."

"You can trust Nathan Hawkins, dear. Please try him."

Then Beatrice told him of the debt her mother owed, and of Hicks Jarou's expressed wish that she should marry the king, and his implied promise that the debt would then be paid. A puzzled expression crept into Nathan's eyes—an expression that turned to incredulity and then to understanding as the story proceeded. When she told about his desire that a new race be started in Tyrsanghee, he laughed aloud.

"Now that sounds exactly like Jarou!" he exclaimed. "He is a dreamer! He imagines all manner of things that never could be anything more than a dream—and while he is working out an idea, he is absolutely dead to the world and all its customs. After what you've told me, I shouldn't be at all surprised if his king were a resurrected body—just as I am—or a body that has been tampered with in some way, as he tampered with poor Three Eyes. I'm sure the king has had experiences beyond the grave, for he has told me of them. We've compared experiences."

"But would Mr. Jarou let a girl whom he had called his friend marry a man who—who was not—not normal?"

"He might not consider the king abnormal. I'm sure he does not consider me so—yet I've been dead and buried, and my shattered heart was mended and set to beating again. I am not the man you knew as Percy Southdown, and the Percy Southdown you knew was a travesty on everything desirable. I am a better man today, however, than I was before I masqueraded as Southdown, and a much better man than I could have

become had it not been for that experience. I presume Hicks Jarou is judging Omar-Kouli, not from his past, but by what that past has made of him."

"Then you advise me to marry King Omar-Kouli—and so cancel mother's debt to Hicks Jarou?"

"Lord! what a cold-blooded proposition."

"Isn't it—when stripped of the polite verbiage demanded by our social customs. Yet you and I know of more than one marriage based on satisfactory financial agreements."

"Our engagement was different—it *was*, wasn't it, Beatrice? I was a good deal of a rascal, but I give you my word I was not thinking of money or position—but only of you."

Beatrice thought quickly. What should she say to him? What was she feeling? She loved him once—she knew beyond any doubt that he still loved her. She enjoyed talking to him—but would she marry him, if she were free to make a choice—if her mother's debt did not stand between them? Would she? A common workman? She was convinced that he was a better man than Percy Southdown to whom she had been engaged. She knew it would not be impossible to forgive all he had done—that—other things being equal, his masquerade would not stand in the way of a renewal of their engagement. "Other things being equal—" yes, she could not deny it. She was thinking of his loss of social position. She did not mind the loss of the title—but to give up old friends, the gay life she had had, the personal comfort that had surrounded her—to live the life of a workman's wife—

"Percy," she said soberly—"I mean, Nathan, I can see that I am my mother's own daughter. If, when we met, you had been dressed as you are now, I should simply not have seen you."

"I can understand that; but after we'd become engaged—if I'd lost wealth and position through no fault of my own—if you had not lost faith in me—if I had not shamed you as I did—if I'd been worthy, dear, I'm sure you'd have stood by me."

"Perhaps," she replied, doubtfully. "I don't know. I'd like to think of myself as a girl of noble character—a regular heroine,"—she laughed a little—"but I'm afraid I couldn't make good. I love to be comfortable."

"Well," replied Nathan bravely, "I shouldn't like to be the man to make you uncomfortable. But we must get back to the question before the house—because I must get back to my work. You asked me if I'd advise you to marry King Omar-Kouli. My reply is, no; not unless you love him. It wouldn't be honest."

"Not when it is understood to be a marriage of convenience?"

"Perhaps, under those conditions—if you can stand for them," replied Nathan, in a tone of deep disgust. "I'm afraid I can't advise you," he added, hastily. "You see, I've changed. Much that I once accepted as all right, now seems absolutely rotten. Goodby, Beatrice, I really must run along to my work."

He touched his hat, with his old-time grace, and before she could find a word to say by way of reply, he had left her and was striding away as if his main purpose in life were to get too far away to hear her voice, should she try to call him back.

"Well!" exclaimed Beatrice, "that's that! And he's gone away with about as poor an opinion of me as I could ever have had of him."

For a long time she sat there lost in thought, then with a sigh she arose and drew on her gloves. She was hating herself because this thought had come to her: If Hicks Jarou had made Nathan Hawkins King of Tyrsanghee, how much easier it would be for her to decide what to do. And that served to remind her that her errand was still undone. She had still to make Hicks Jarou suffer! Then she realized that the task did not appeal to her quite as it had before she met Nathan Hawkins. She could no longer be as convincing as she wished to be when denouncing him, for Nathan had shown her that she herself was open to criticism. What had she done to deserve anything better than she was receiving? If she were

bought and sold like so much merchandise was it not because of her own inertia? What had she ever done to remove herself from the merchandise class? Was not submission a form of acceptance? And what of her present state of revolt? Was she not in reality still willing to remain merchandise, so long as none of the details of transfer were talked of in her presence, and she was given the opportunity to choose her purchaser?

She reached the home of Hicks Jarou with these thoughts uppermost in her mind. This wouldn't do at all. She must get back to the mental condition with which she had started out. She had rung the bell. What did she mean to say to the scientist whom she had called friend?

CHAPTER XVI.

Runjeet Singh opened the door. He looked his surprise as he politely invited Beatrice to enter, and gave her a seat in the wide hall.

"I will tell the master you are here," he said, and opened a door on the left, which was almost directly behind her.

Beatrice felt the disapproval in the man's manner, and resented it. How dared he — a mere foreigner, to criticise her, an American! Then her good sense returned. "But of course!" she told herself. "His women would be chaperoned."

"Will you step this way?" asked Runjeet Singh a moment later, and ushered her into the library. "Will this chair suit you?" She assented and he was gone. She was alone. Her adventure had begun. Hicks Jarou would be with her in a moment. What should she say to him — how begin to make him suffer?

"My friend gives me the very great pleasure—" King Omar-Kouli was speaking. He was bowing low before her.

"I came to see Mr. Jarou," she said, coldly, "on a matter of business."

"Mr. Jarou will try not to keep you waiting long. He is in the midst of a most absorbing experiment. To leave that, at its present stage, would be worse than death." The king spoke mockingly. "There are many things in life that are worse than death," he continued, "and this is one of them. But you and I wouldn't think so. Shall I tell you what I would consider worse than death?"

"Since Mr. Jarou is so busy," interrupted Beatrice, "I will not wait to see him. I can come another day — and next time I'll be wise enough to make an appointment."

She had risen, as she spoke, and was turning toward the door. She was suddenly anxious to get out of that house.

She wished she had not come. Even the king dared look his disapproval — the king who had intimated that he wished to marry her. Why had she been so silly as to come to a man's house alone! She did not care to be classed with the women who did such things, although she fiercely resented any criticism of them by a mere man. She turned to go — with what dignity she could summon — but the king stood between her and the door. He was laughing, but there was a look in his eyes — a look of determination — and she knew he did not intend to let her get away so easily.

"No, no," he pleaded; "don't run away. I was asked to amuse you for just a moment. Don't make me confess myself a failure."

"I do not care to be amused, thank you."

"But I do so long to talk to you, quite informally, and without a silly audience. Please! Won't you stay?"

He was between her and the door. She felt certain she could not leave without making an effort that would give the situation absurd importance.

"Why not walk home with me? We can talk on the way."

"No, no, no. That wouldn't do at all. Please don't let me waste any more time standing between you and the door."

"Oh, very well, then. But be good enough not to keep me long."

He led her back to her chair, and drew up another for himself — drew it closer than she liked,—and then he took both her hands in his.

"Don't do that!" she said, sharply, drawing her hands away. "I hate to have my hands held."

"But how can I make love to you, then?" he asked, quite like a troubled boy. "How can I convince you that I am in earnest? You jeer at everything I say. You are not giving me a square deal. Why don't you listen, as girls are supposed to listen to a man's proposal of marriage?"

"Because I know you are not in earnest."

The king suddenly knelt before her. "Is this the kind of love-making you demand," he asked, as he caught her hands and covered them with kisses. Then still holding her hands, he began to repeat an impassioned declaration from a melodrama long since forgotten. He did it well. Then he looked up into her face and laughed impudently. "Is that what you wanted?" he asked.

"It was interesting — but a little too long," replied Beatrice critically. She had decided to act as if she believed him to be joking. "One wouldn't care to have it repeated."

"One wouldn't care to repeat it," retorted the king, sternly. "It is an affront to my dignity. I am a king. I have just proposed marriage to a girl who has neither fame nor fortune. A girl whose temper is easily aroused, but whose physique is perfect. I shall not repeat that proposal. I await your reply."

"Give me until tomorrow to think it over."

"If you mean to marry me, you know it now. You've been thinking it over ever since I transferred my attentions from Mrs. Somers to you."

"Perhaps I am wondering when they will be transferred back to Mrs. Somers."

"Jealous, eh? Well, that's all right. That sounds good to me. You couldn't be jealous if you were as indifferent as you pretend to be."

"If I appear — anything but indifferent — it is because I am thinking of Hicks Jarou. I'm afraid he wishes me to marry you."

"I know he does. So do I wish it. Why do you think more about what he wants than you do about what I want?"

"You are thinking of yourself. He is thinking what would be best for Tyrsanghee."

"Tyrsanghee is not in any particular need of you and he knows it. Hicks Jarou is a colossal fraud."

"Stop! I won't hear such talk. I respect and admire Mr. Jarou more than any man I have ever met."

"He is to be congratulated. Does he know how much you respect and admire him?"

"He is too busy to care. He is a very great scientist. Have you no comprehension of what such a man means to the world?"

"Oh, I know that he is a student of biology — and has done some surprising things along his line, but I can't see that they are destined to make anyone better or happier."

"The researches of the scientist form the foundation of all knowledge — you must know that."

"Take that hand-made body, for instance—"

"What hand-made body?" interrupted Beatrice.

"You know, don't you, that he built a body out of protoplasm — and got it to a point where it could assimilate food?"

"No, I never heard of that. That is quite wonderful — if true. Do you know that to be a fact?"

"I have so stated it. You have no reason to doubt my word. He started the work on the theory that the human body is a sort of machine whose function is to convert one kind of energy into another kind."

"Well, he is right about that, isn't he?"

"In a way, yes; but he thinks the body is the whole thing. He believes it lives and functions and decays and dies, and is worked over into some other form of life — and that's the end of man."

"And you don't agree with him about that?"

"I know he is wrong. But he is so stupid—"

"Oh, no, my friend; no man can truthfully call Hicks Jarou stupid."

"Don't look so incensed. How you do stand up for your friends! And in a way you are right about Hicks Jarou. A man who could construct a human body, and design an incubator to grow it in — an incubator with mechanical devices to provide necessary artificial respiration and control circulation — and say! you ought to see the quality of blood he has manufactured! Why, I cut my finger the other day—"

"As your physician," interrupted a voice icy in its sternness, "I must ask you to leave this room at once." Hicks Jarou stood before them, his eyes a blue flame of wrath, his body rigid with suppressed emotion that made him quite terrible to look upon. Beatrice was frightened. She had never seen him like that. But King Omar-Kouli regarded him with cool insolence.

"Since when," he asked, "have I given you permission to control my actions!" He drew himself to his full height — a magnificent specimen of manhood — and looked upon Hicks Jarou with something like contempt. At that moment he appeared every inch a king.

"You will come with me," said Hicks Jarou, controlling himself with a mighty effort, "or I will take you by force."

"You will never be able to do that," replied the king, "and you know it. You might, however, rend this body limb from limb in the effort. That is up to you. I don't care."

"Oh," gasped Beatrice, "how dreadful!"

Hicks Jarou stepped between her and the king. "You have gone too far," he said, sternly. "I command you to obey me."

"I must refuse," replied the king coldly. "I do not leave this room until I am ready to go. It was your plan that I should wed this young lady. Well, I propose to do it."

"Without my consent?" demanded Beatrice, haughtily.

"I'll win your consent, all right, all right." This many sided king had dropped his air of command for the manners of a buffoon. "Girls always fall for me, and your time has come. Hicksey can't expect me to change my mind every time he changes his. Run along, old top. I'm going to try out some mid-Victorian love-making, now. Listen Bee! You know you're interested. I'm about to mention your strong points—from the stand-point of a king who has found his queen."

"Are you annoyed, Beatrice?" asked Hicks Jarou solicitously. "You are not obliged to listen, if you don't care to. This fellow is not in his best mood."

"Old man, you make yourself scarce. Hear me?" The king was speaking, and he was very angry. "If you interfere in any way between Beatrice and me, I'll leave this precious handiwork of yours in such a condition that it will never again find a tenant."

"Listen!" exclaimed Beatrice to the king. "There is something I do not quite understand. Do you mean to say that you are the body of which you have been telling me?"

"I am living in that body," replied the king.

"And you made it — out of protoplasm?" she asked Hicks Jarou.

"I made it — such as it is."

"What's wrong with it?"

"I don't know, but I'll find out if it takes the rest of my life. Having gone thus far, it cannot be my lot to fail now. Beatrice, I've given years of hard work to this endeavor — I must not fail now. I must find the solution to the vexing problem that has presented itself."

"Seems to me you might feel fairly well pleased with your work—" she said, after a moment of serious consideration.

"No, no, no," interrupted Hicks Jarou — "not so long as it presents a problem which I cannot define and solve."

The king laughed. "Hicksey," he said, "why can't you out with it, like a man? Why not own that you've been wrong?"

Hicks Jarou made no reply. His black brows were drawn together, and he looked like a thunder cloud.

"Trouble is, Beatrice," continued the king, "this great scientist has finally become convinced that the body is not the man. He is suffering from growing pains, and it makes him cross. He made this body — yes, don't look so astounded: it isn't such a mighty gift to the world. He really did make this body—but the most important fact is that he did not make me!"

"You sound rather foolish — seems to me," said Beatrice waveringly. This stupendous fact was almost too much for her mind, and she hardly realized what she was saying.

"It is an amazing statement," conceded the king; "nevertheless it is true. Hicksey thought he owned me because he made the body I'm living in. It has been a hard job for him to realize that the body of which he has been so proud is of no earthly use except when some poor wandering astral is in possession."

Beatrice turned to Hicks Jarou. "Do you believe," she asked, "that he knows what he is talking about? He is your guest. You introduced him to me. Now tell me, is Omar-Kouli a real man, or isn't he? I've a right to be told the truth."

Hicks Jarou hesitated. He was seeking words that she would understand. "Well," he replied slowly, "I do not think you would consider him a real man."

The king hooted in amused derision. "I am as real as you are," he declared, indicating them both quite impartially. "Beatrice, I'll ask you the question I've often asked him. What difference does it make that I am living in a body different from that I first carried about! Do you know how many bodies you have had?"

"Of course I do. What a silly question."

"Not as silly as you think. I happen to know that you've lived on earth at least three times before this."

"Oh, talk sense," she replied, with more emphasis than politeness, "or else keep still. You annoy me excessively."

"I have been forced to admit something I never could believe before," said Hicks Jarou to Beatrice, as she turned to him after silencing the king.

"What is that?" she asked. "May I know?"

"I now am of the opinion," replied Jarou, gravely, "that our bodies may be moved about by some entity whose mystery I have not yet solved."

"Whose mystery you never will solve," interrupted the king. "A mystery that only God knows anything about."

"We are not discussing God," replied Hicks Jarou, sternly.

"Just hear the hard boiled egg!" chuckled the king. "Even yet he won't really admit a power greater than himself."

"There seems to be," went on Hicks Jarou, judicially, "some sort of entity that goes and comes without my knowledge or intervention. I must admit that I have no control over it. Since I have been forced to admit that fact I have felt that you should know. I no longer urge you to wed this mechanism. The entity now in possession may leave at any moment."

"Don't worry about that, Beatrice," said the king. "Of course anyone is liable, at any time, to have some mishap that will compel him to leave his body. You must realize—both of you—that you may die at any moment — that when the time comes you are helpless. As I have already pointed out, Hicksey may die years before I pull out of this very attractive shell. I have decided to stick as long as the Law allows. I mean by that — the great Law of the Universe — the Law that is beyond Hicksey's comprehension — the Law that has appointed a definite time when I shall no longer be allowed to function on this plane. Yet, having only borrowed this body, I can depart whenever I so decide."

"That is what I've been trying to tell you, Beatrice," said Hicks Jarou, wearily. "When I believed that I understood this mechanism — knew that it was made of the best material—that no disease lurked in its tissues — then I dared plan for a future race that I hoped would be superior to anything this world has ever known. When I realized that I had something I could not control — then I saw differently."

"Hicksey is discouraged," said the king sympathetically—"and I don't wonder. He's had a hard jolt. When one has believed in himself alone — and is forced to realize that he is only a cog in a wheel that he did not know existed — why it's enough to take the starch out of any man. He's so blue that he can't even see what an interesting thing he really did when he made a human body by purely mechanical measures.

It would be a great pity to have all his effort wasted — don't you think so?"

"Yes," replied Beatrice with decision; "I most certainly do."

"Well, it rests with you. I'll agree to stick to the last minute allowed me, if you'll agree to become my queen."

"And if I refuse?" asked Beatrice, curiously.

The king took a small pill from his pocket. "In that case," he said, "I shall swallow this."

"What is that?" asked Hicks Jarou, apprehensively.

"A bit of the most powerful explosive known."

"Explosive!" exclaimed Beatrice.

"Explosive," responded the king, his eyes dancing with amusement. "When I take it, I shall fall down — hard! Farewell, beautiful body!"

"You have no right—" began Hicks Jarou, "that body belongs to me."

"I shall assume the right to fall down — hard," chuckled the king. "It won't be the first body I have lived in — and destroyed."

Beatrice looked from the king to the scientist and back again — and her heart ached for the scientist. She had forgotten how she had planned to make him suffer. Now she was wondering how she might help him.

"You wouldn't do a thing like that," she said to the king. "you couldn't be so cruel. Think of the years of patient labor you would render worthless! Think what the body must mean to him. Please, please promise me you will not destroy it."

"It is a shame to destroy it before the world has had an opportunity to know what Hicksey has done," admitted the king; "but — its fate rests with you."

Beatrice turned to Hicks Jarou, who stood leaning on a high-backed chair — his face as white as death. It was the first time in his long life that he had sought support.

"I understand now, dear friend," she said, "just what you meant when you spoke of me as the mother of a new race—I understand what that dream has meant to you."

"Can you ever forgive me," moaned Hicks Jarou.

"There is nothing to forgive!" there was an exultant ring in her voice. "I am honored in being chosen by the world's greatest scientist to help him bring his life-work to completion."

"That means," interrupted the king.

"That means," said Beatrice, "that I am glad to obey the man whom I consider greater than any king."

"That is not very flattering to me," grumbled the king.

"I am not here to flatter you. I hold that it is your business as well as mine to forget self at a time like this. We are both simply the instruments needed to carry out a great purpose."

"Do what you like with that body," interrupted Hicks Jarou curtly. "I have decided that this wonder-girl is not going to be sacrificed."

"Thank you!" replied the king, with sarcasm; "but your permission to do as I please with this body does not affect the situation at all. You made certain plans — worked along certain lines — never once thought of the comfort or convenience or preference of those who were to carry out your plans—and as has always been the case where selfishness tried to rule, the time has arrived when the situation has become beyond your control or your liking. It is not for you to say whether or not Beatrice shall carry out your plan. That rests with us."

"I am willing to go to Tyrsanghee," said Beatrice, simply. "I do not want you to feel that your work has been in vain. I want to help you."

"But hold on!" exclaimed the king; "what of me? I claim your attention — your fealty — your affection — your promise to be my wife in every sense of the word."

"And I look upon you simply as the work of a great scientist. I can not promise to give you any particular consideration. Of course I do not love you! How could I?"

"Why not?" demanded the king; "women have always loved me."

"You are contemptible — but you seem to have been chosen to help carry out a great idea—"

The king held up his hand — a command for silence that was unmistakable.

"Say no more," he said, sternly. "You have settled the question. I will bid you both good afternoon." He turned away, and then waved them an impudent farewell, smiling at them as he stood in the doorway. "I wonder," he said, "if it would interest you to know that I have sold my opera, and that it is to be produced?"

He closed the door and went out singing at the top of his voice.

"A King was completed today.
He's not made in the usual way.
He's a dummy king, so they say,
And the devils laugh as they sing,
Holy Smoke, what a king."

"What a well-poised body!" murmured Hicks Jarou, as he watched the king down the street. "What grace! What co-ordination! What suppleness! the poetry of motion! a symphony of life."

"It is all that and more," replied Beatrice, "and yet it doesn't represent the greatest thing life has to offer."

"No," he replied, vaguely; "no, I suppose not."

"For so wonderful a man," she continued, "it is surprising how mistaken you have been in so many ways."

The starry glance she cast Hicks Jarou caused again a queer, yet delightful sensation in the cardiac region, which had once before led him to suspect that there were some delightful secrets about life the existence of which he had never guessed.

"I realize," he said meekly, "that I have much to learn."

"Do you think," she asked, "that the king will do anything dreadful to that body?"

"No, I don't think so. He has made threats before this."

"I—I couldn't promise to—to really care for him. It would be like falling in love with a piece of furniture. But I don't want him to destroy your work. You understand, don't you, that a girl must look up to a man—believe in him—feel that she is needed in his scheme of life, or she can't love him?"

"Yes," replied Hicks Jarou, absent-mindedly; "I suppose that is very true. To tell the truth, I've never given such things a great deal of thought."

"Why not begin now?" demanded Beatrice, quite unashamed. "You need a real home—some one to take care of you when you are busy—some one to be interested in your work. You need a good wife."

"No," replied Hicks Jarou with conviction, "I should not know what to do with a wife. I've lived too long without one. I should not know how to make a woman happy. It would be a bore to try to be a good husband. It would be especially trying when I was particularly lost in some great secret that I was trying to fathom."

At this moment, Runjeet Singh entered the room..

"The worst has happened," he exclaimed, looking the picture of despair. "Oh, Master, I bring you news of a tragedy! The body is a wreck. It is utterly destroyed. It has been blown into a thousand pieces."

For a moment Hicks Jarou looked dazed. He swayed, as if about to faint, and Beatrice ran to his assistance. But he quickly regained his composure.

"We must not let the world know what this means to us," he said, placing his hand quite affectionately on the shoulder of his faithful servant. "Remember, this accident has happened to the king—as it might to any man, our guest, and act accordingly. We'll do all that custom demands in such cases."

"I think I know," replied Runjeet Singh, hastening out to take up his part in the tragedy. "Franklin Potter will take care of the funeral arrangements."

"Tell him to make them impressive," commanded the scientist.

"Try not to care too much," said Beatrice, softly. "Of course you can make another body."

"Yes," replied Hicks Jarou, wearily; "yes—if it seems worth while, when I have thought it over. It takes years—years—and if it could never be anything but a failure—but that is for the future to decide. Now I must think about you. You tried honestly to do as I wished. Your mother's debt is paid. You may tell her so for me. She has nothing more to fear."

"You are very generous," faltered Beatrice.

"Not particularly," interrupted Hicks Jarou. "What I lent her I shall never miss. I simply wished to make it of use in carrying out a dream that is now shattered. Neither she nor you is to blame for that."

"I am," sobbed Beatrice. "I did not play my part as I might have done. I see that now. I could have promised him—what he demanded—and the body would not have been destroyed."

"No, really," argued Hicks Jarou, "I think you could not have promised, because I am quite sure you love another man."

"You know that?" asked Beatrice looking up, almost hopefully. "I really thought you were blind to—to—"

"Not as blind as you think," boasted the scientist. "I saw you sitting beside him on the park bench. I saw you holding his hand."

"But," began Beatrice, "you mistake—"

"Oh, no I don't," and he shook his head in quite the old way—like one who couldn't possibly be mistaken. "And I'll add, if my opinion is of any interest to you—that I really think it will be an excellent arrangement. Nathan Hawkins is the best man I have ever known. And with your mother's debts all paid you will be quite free to do as you wish."

Beatrice shrugged her shoulders, a smile of tolerance on her lips. "I think," she said, "that you don't know what you're talking about."

Jarou stared in surprise, then a smile of comprehension brightened his face. "I understand much better than you think," he said gaily. "The troublesome mother has been removed from your pathway."

"The troublesome—you mean—" faltered Beatrice, and then swayed as if faint—"something has happened to my mother!"

"Don't worry. You misunderstand. Something has happened to your mother—but she is well pleased."

"What do you mean?"

"She called upon Franklin Potter. I was going in as she came out. I persuaded her to go back with me. I made them a very good proposition. They are, at this moment, going through the marriage ceremony. No," looking at his watch, "it is later than I thought. They are now married."

"My mother and Franklin Potter?"

"Your mother and Franklin Potter."

"I don't believe it."

"Not very polite, but I pardon you. The good news has upset you—but try to see what a very fine arrangement it is."

"Fine arrangement! Did you compel them to do this?"

"Most certainly not. I simply mentioned finances in my most agreeable manner. Now don't look so mutinous. They'll be much more contented, together, than either could be alone. I predict that they'll cut a rather wide swath in Royalton, now that their finances permit."

"Mr. Jarou, why did you do this?"

"I did not propose that either one of them should spoil your life."

"But my own mother—"

"She could not be happy in a workman's home, even though he were her son-in-law, and quite willing to support her to the best of his ability."

"Do you think I could be happy—in a workman's home?"

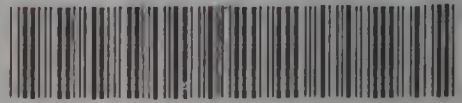
"I don't know.."

"And with a man who had deceived me," continued Beatrice. "Do you think I could forget that?"

"I don't know. We all need to be forgiven for something, dear child. But at least you are now quite free to do as you wish."

"To do as I wish!" mused Beatrice as she slowly took her way homewards. "I wonder if anyone ever can do that! I wonder if anyone ever knows absolutely what they would do if they could do as they pleased—it is all so puzzling! I think I could have been very happy helping Hicks Jarou—and he doesn't want any help. As for Nathan—Oh, I don't know what to think about him!"

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